2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM

A film by Malte Ludin

★ Premiered Berlin Film Festival
★ 9 months continuous screenings in Berlin
★ American premiere - theatrical run Film Forum, NYC

Germany, 2005, 85 min, German w/ English subtitles, 35MM, Beta, DVD

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1/29/07
by Richard Brody

2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM

The German filmmaker Malte Ludin’s father was Hanns Ludin, a fervent Nazi since the nineteen-twenties and a close associate of Hitler who also served as ambassador to the puppet regime of Slovakia. Malte, the second-youngest of six children, was five years old when his father was executed, in 1947, for war crimes; his film courageously probes the effect of this legacy, and the revelations are shocking. His three surviving sisters find ways to minimize, excuse, and dismiss their father’s crimes—one calls the murdered Jews anti-German partisans who were killed in the course of war—though Malte, a dogged researcher, presents them with wartime documents proving that their father oversaw the deportation of Slovakia’s Jews despite knowing that they were headed for “physical liquidation.” The filmmaker doesn’t shrink from debating heatedly with his sisters onscreen or exposing them to their children as liars. His nephew Fabian declares the Third Reich guilty of “probably the most atrocious crimes ever committed in human history”; this film is a valuable attempt to confront their enduring influence. In German and Slovak.—R.B. (Film Forum.)
The Nazis ruled Germany for 12 years and inflicted their cruelty on other European nations for around 7. Coming to terms with what Hitler and his followers did has been a much longer project — involving Jews, Germans, other Europeans and just about everyone else in the world — and it is unlikely to end anytime soon. Like many other films and books, “2 or 3 Things I Know About Him,” a new documentary directed by Malte Ludin, examines the impact of Nazism on a single family, in this case the family of a high-ranking member of Hitler’s government. But if it tells, in Mr. Ludin’s words, “a typical German story,” the movie also offers an unusually matter-of-fact picture of the private and public effects of ordinary evil.

The filmmaker’s father, Hanns Ludin, who served as the Third Reich’s ambassador to the Nazi vassal state of Slovakia, and who in that capacity signed deportation orders sending thousands of Jews to Auschwitz, was executed for war crimes in 1947. He left behind a wife, Erla, and six children.

Malte, the youngest (born in 1942), waited until his mother died before embarking on this film, though it includes earlier interviews he did with her. The title, apart from its distracting and irrelevant nod in the direction of Jean-Luc Godard, suggests that Hanns Ludin remains, in his son’s eyes, a mysterious, unknowable figure, and the younger Mr. Ludin’s interviews with other family members contribute to the blurriness of the picture.

Archival photographs and film clips of the father show a stout, smiling fellow, in and out of uniform, and Malte Ludin’s surviving sisters recall him with some fondness. One sister, Barbel, emerges as her father’s staunch defender, and the most wrenching scenes in the film show her and Malte Ludin on screen together, arguing doggedly about the nuances of guilt, responsibility and shame.

Barbel insists that she feels none herself, and furthermore tries to mitigate the portrait of her father as a heartless monster. She resorts to some familiar rationalizations — that he couldn’t have known the full truth about Auschwitz; that he tried to resist or subvert the most inhumane Nazi policies; that many slaughtered by the Nazis should be thought of as casualties of war who got what was coming to them — which all bolster her conviction that Hanns Ludin was, in the end, a victim.

This startling conclusion is not altogether unheard of in postwar Germany. The idea that the German people were the victims of Hitler’s madness rather than its sponsors has proven durable and convenient in that nation’s postwar culture. Mr. Ludin’s anxious, questioning, self-lacerating inquiry represents a powerful countertendency toward full acknowledgment of shared culpability, and his quarrel with Barbel is part of what makes this “a typical German story.”

Barbel’s loyalty to her father’s memory is both touching and appalling, but her refusal to admit the truth about his actions is something worse. Hanns Ludin joined the SA paramilitary organization in
1931; survived the 1934 Night of the Long Knives, in which Hitler’s potential political rivals were massacred; and openly celebrated his Führer’s birthday in April 1945, at a time when more than a few die-hard Nazis, glimpsing the Allies’ armies over the horizon, underwent an expedient change of heart.

All the evidence presented in “2 or 3 Things” suggests that Hanns Ludin served the National Socialist cause zealously, and the testimony of survivors — including a member of the Jewish family whose house in Slovakia the Ludins expropriated — leave no doubt regarding his central role in organized mass murder. To call him a victim is to strip all meaning from the word.

What is it like to have such a man as a father or a grandfather? Even those whose parents and grandparents died because of his actions approach this question, in Mr. Ludin’s presence, with something resembling pity. And while it is no real comfort, the victims and their descendants are able to regard the past with a moral clarity that eludes Mr. Ludin’s siblings.

His wife, Iva Svarcova, also the film’s producer, was born in Czechoslovakia in the early 1960s, and the influence of her perspective on 20th-century European history, necessarily distinct from her husband’s, is evident through much of the film.

Mr. Ludin’s nieces and nephews — Hanns Ludin’s grandchildren — were all born after the war, and are the products of a sane, democratic and affluent society (apart from the ones who grew up in apartheid-era South Africa). They are thus less anguished by the family history, and their sensitive, sensible voices give “2 or 3 Things I Know About Him” a measure of earned and authentic optimism. It is possible for a nation to descend into evil, but over time, recovery is also possible.

2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM
Opens today in Manhattan. Written (in German and Slovak, with English subtitles) and directed by Malte Ludin; director of photography, Franz Lustig; edited by Mr. Ludin and Iva Svarcova; music by Werner Pirchner, Hakim Ludin and Jaroslav Nahovica; produced by Ms. Svarcova; released by the National Center for Jewish Film. Playing with Benjamin Ross’s 18-minute English-language film, “Torte Blume,” at Film Forum, 209 West Houston Street, west of Avenue of the Americas, South Village. Running time: 85 minutes. This film is not rated.
Documentary films about filmmakers’ bad fathers are generally a dime a dozen—but this one trumps them all. Hanns Ludin was a Nazi leader of the SA and a Third Reich officer in charge of Slovakia. His son Malte Ludin does an admirable, disturbing, and often bemusing job of reminding us how much can change in one generation, and how difficult it can be to know one’s father, particularly if he was executed for war crimes in 1947.

Hanns Ludin, as remembered by his children, was a bon vivant and a lover of jokes, good food, and wine. And as Hitler’s man in Slovakia during World War II, Ludin gave orders that packed off thousands of Jews to the gas chamber before he was hanged in 1947. A tattered family album of a documentary—assembled by Ludin’s youngest child, filmmaker Malte Ludin, with the wary participation of his siblings—two or three things I know about him can’t reconcile Daddy’s kind moon face with the Nazi regalia on his collar: His large hands, remembered so fondly by one daughter, signed deportment papers that dispatched other children’s daddies to
their deaths.

Hanns Ludin, patriarch
The National Center for Jewish Film

Two or Three Things I Know About Him
Directed by Malte Ludin
January 24 through February 6, Film Forum

Malte's film tells "a typical German story"—how the surviving Ludins deal with the storm trooper in the closet by denial (the filmmaker's nephew grew up convinced Hanns was some kind of resistance hero), avoidance (one sister testily deflects any talk of her father's guilt), or trampoline leaps of logic (think of the Jews that Daddy didn't kill!). Parallels between the whitewashing of personal and national histories are too obvious to state at a time when arguments still rage over how many Germans actually served as Hitler's willing executioners.

Malte's discomforting interviews with his siblings, supplemented by surreally matter-of-fact, Zelig-like photos of Hanns in Hitler's company, make for gripping and confrontational viewing. Yet the harder he persists, the less clear it is what he wants from his family. Confession? Renunciation of their father, whose presence the filmmaker was too young to feel as acutely as his siblings did? What keeps this from becoming the ultimate in voyeuristic family strip-mining—Tarnation in jackboots—are the scenes in which Malte punctures the self-righteousness of his crusade. Facing a poet who lost his family to Malte's father, the filmmaker instinctively resorts to the same semantic dodges and feeble justifications his siblings make to minimize the old man's culpability. His shame is palpable—as it might be for Americans who grew up sidestepping the question of what their ancestors did back in the days of slavery and Jim Crow.

By Doris Toumarkine
January 26, 2007

2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM

NATIONAL CENTER FOR JEWISH FILM/Color-B&W/1.66//85 Mins./Not Rated
Featuring: Malte Ludin, Iva Svarcova, Erla Ludin, Barbel Ludin.

This exceptional documentary about the surviving members of a prominent family whose paterfamilias was an executed Nazi war criminal is an illumination of convenient rationalization and denial on a grand scale.
Filmmaker Malte Ludin is the youngest surviving son of a family of six whose father was Hanns Ludin, a prominent Nazi whose early dedication to Hitler and whose rise to his position as an ambassador to and governing minister in the Nazi vassal state of Slovakia led to his 1947 execution as a war criminal.

In *2 or 3 Things I Know About Him*, Ludin amasses a wealth of archival footage and documents to tell his famous disgraceful story and weaves this material into interviews with witnesses, who, most disturbingly, include his surviving siblings—all sisters taking relative comfort in various degrees of denial.

Ludin traces his father’s early roots as an ardent Nazi in his 20s who became an S.A. leader but managed to escape Hitler’s infamous Night of the Long Knives decimation of his S.A. troopers in the early ’30s. Ludin pere went on to “greatness,” becoming Hitler’s choice at the outbreak of World War II to oversee Nazi-leaning Slovakia. There, Ludin oversaw such matters as the relocation of the area’s Jews to the camps.

Much of the denial and rationalization in the film has to do with how much Ludin pere actually knew about the Jews’ fate—whether they were being sent to labor facilities or to their death. While Malte Ludin, born in 1942, was too young to know his father well, older sisters were more attached to him and emerge his defenders.

Documents and interviews with some of Slovakia’s Jewish survivors make clear that Hanns Ludin was, indeed, a very efficient Nazi. Thanks to commentary from Malte Ludin and his producer wife Iva Svarcova and reactions from the younger generation of Ludins, all of whom are fully aware of the unthinkable sins of the father and the regime he so loyally served, *2 or 3 Things* gives hope. But the film, a must-see for those always eager for more insight into the Nazi era, is also a cautionary tale about the power of denial and of evil that can be practiced by both the banal bureaucrat and the seemingly more refined bourgeois who should know better. Malte Ludin has skillfully combed archives and maneuvered his stern sisters to deliver a complex and hugely personal portrait of an extreme legacy.

**NEW YORK POST**

**MOVIE REVIEW**

**FATHER AS FUHRER FIGURE**

By KYLE SMITH

January 24, 2007 -- GERMAN guilt gets a vigorous workout in the penetrating and symbolically important documentary "Two or Three Things I Know About Him," in which a man born in 1942 investigates the secrets of his father's Nazi past.

The father, Hanns Ludin, was a Fuhrer lover who was frequently photographed with his boss. Ludin's son Malte has almost no memory of his father, but interviews with his mother and older sisters slowly tease out the complicated personality of Hanns, who was an early and fanatical standard-bearer for National Socialism.

As a reward for his Nazi service, the senior Ludin was appointed ambassador to Slovakia - where he
sent Jews to their deaths. In 1947, he was executed for crimes against humanity. His paper trail survives. That's gruesome history, but what's even more fascinating is the "Capturing the Friedmans" angle of a family arguing over what their father stood for. The family involved is an entire nation. Malte Ludin is a steady guide as he seeks neither to excuse nor to wallow in guilt but simply to face the truth.

His siblings, though, are shockingly reluctant to go even that far. "My father seemed like a hero, a martyr," says Malte's brother. A grandson is under the impression that Hanns Ludin was a "resistance fighter."

Malte's sisters - one of whom, as a toddler, was photographed bestowing flowers on Hitler as though he were Uncle Adolf - become increasingly agitated as Malte gently reminds them of the facts. All of Germany needs to have such a discussion. "I can't say [my father] wasn't a criminal, but for me, he definitely wasn't," says one of Malte's sisters. Asked about shame, she says, "I don't know what that is." As she says this, shame burns across every inch of her face.

**TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM** Patrimony of the Fatherland. Running time: 85 minutes. Not Rated (disturbing material). At the Film Forum, Houston Street, east of Sixth Avenue.

New York

'Two or Three Things' exposes a family horror
By Jay Carr
January 23, 2007

**MOVIE REVIEW**
2 or 3 Things I Know About Him
Documentary by Malte Ludin

A family confronts a difficult past

Hanns Ludin signed on early with Hitler. He rose steadily in the Nazi ranks. As Hitler's wartime ambassador to Slovakia, he signed deportation orders sending thousands of Jews to Auschwitz. In 1947, he was hanged as a war criminal. He left a widow and six children.

Malte Ludin faces his family legacy— the fact that his father Hanns Elard Ludin was a prominent Nazi.

The youngest, Malte Ludin, now 64, brings more than an up-close and personal perspective to '2 or 3 Things I Know About Him,' his documentary about his family history. Because he's part of the family, he doesn't have to be tactful. And he doesn't let his sisters off the hook when it comes to soft-pedaling their father's guilt.
Hanns may have been a loving father, as Malte’s older sisters insist, but Malte doesn’t accept their rationalizations that Jews were killed because they were part of armed partisan resistance groups. Nor will he buy the comforting lie that their father was a resistance hero, or that their mother really believed that Auschwitz was a munitions factory. Aided by reams of official paperwork, he makes his sisters face the ugly truth, disputing them on camera. As the agonized and agonizing confrontations proceed, and excuse after excuse is demolished, no Ludin can hide from their bloodstained history.

Accompanying the lacerating and unsparing ‘2 or 3 Things’ at the Film Forum is Benjamin Ross’s 18-minute 'Torte Bluma,' a fictional duet between a death camp SS mucky-muck (Stellan Skarsgaard) and an imprisoned Viennese Jew (Simon McBurney). McBurney’s character has his death sentence overturned when he is chosen to serve as a flunky to the SS officer. He likes to think he belongs to a civilized society, even though the world of the camp is so hopelessly perverse and evil.

Movies in Theaters
New Movies This Week

2 or 3 Things I Know About Him ★★★★★

TV Guide Rating: ★★★★★
BY KEN FOX

German filmmaker Malte Ludin’s gripping documentary about the father he barely knew is both an extraordinary exercise in family history and an example of what Germans call Vergangenheitsbewältigung: “facing the past,” particularly the years of Hitler’s Third Reich.

Ludin's father was no ordinary German, not even one who fell under Hitler's spell once the Fuhrer seized power. Hanns Elard Ludin was an early and committed Nazi who, after being imprisoned in the 1920s for declaring himself a National Socialist, left the moribund German army for the brown-shirted SA — the thuggish, violent paramilitary wing of Hitler’s Nazi party. Ludin's star rose, along with Hitler’s, above the ruins of the Weimar Republic; he remained faithful even after Hitler's bloody 1934 purge of the SA leadership and, after commanding some 300,000 storm troopers during the 1930s, became the Reich's ambassador to Slovakia. In 1941, Ludin moved his family to a lovely Bratislava home recently stolen from a Jewish family and embraced a job whose duties included organizing deportation of Slovakian Jews to Auschwitz, Treblinka and other death camps. Protesting his innocence until the end and claiming he was only following orders, Ludin was tried and hanged as a war criminal in 1947. Then only 5 years old, Malte waited until five years after the death of his mother, Erla, to unpack the family trunk filled with his father's newspaper clippings, documents and personal effects and piece together what he calls "a typical German story" (one shudders to think how true this description must be) and a portrait of the father about whom few spoke truthfully.

Malte’s film is a bold struggle with the past — he includes footage from two separate interviews with his mother as well as his own uncomfortable meeting with a survivor of his father's crimes — and the silent present, as Malte attempts to engage his three surviving sisters and their families on the subject of Hanns Ludin. Perhaps not surprisingly, his eldest sister Barbel has both the clearest memories of her "kind" father and is the most defensive about his role in genocide. With the same mix of willful blindness and flat-out denial that allows her to believe two-thirds of German Jews survived the Holocaust, Barbe insists her father couldn't have known the ultimate fate of the Jews, despite documents bearing his signature that clearly indicate the number of Jews marked for "special handling" — Nazi-speak for murder. "Everyone is alone in their view," Malte states as a way of paraphrasing Barbe's attitude toward the father she bitterly defends. But in an era of shifting history and all-too-easily deniable facts, it's incumbent upon great films like Ludin's to share that viewpoint, particularly when all evidence it points to is what any reasonable person must regard as the truth.
presents

2 or 3 Things I Know About Him

A documentary by
Malte Ludin

Distributed in North America

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www.jewishfilm.org

www.2oder3Dinge.de (German site)

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Germany, 2005, 85 min, German w/ English subtitles, color/b&w, 1:1.85
35mm & Beta Public Performance Rental
North American Television Licensing
Preview DVD & photos available upon request
Synopsis

The stuff of a German family’s memories. The central figure is Hanns Elard Ludin – a dedicated Nazi and SA-leader, an ambitious functionary in the Hitler state, but also a kind of larger-than-life axis on which the family turned. Hanns Ludin was sent to Slovakia by Hitler in 1941 as his ambassador and minister representing the Greater German Reich. On December 9, 1947, Hanns Ludin was sentenced to death as a war criminal in Bratislava and executed.

Malte Ludin, director of *2 or 3 Things I Know About Him*, is Hanns Ludin’s youngest son. Born in 1942, he hardly knew his father. His father’s story was a repressed and therefore ever-present shadow on him, his mother, his four sisters, his brother, and even the third generation of his nieces and nephews. A kind of unquestioned oath of silence had built up around this dark spot. And yet, in their own very different ways, each of the family members relate to their father, husband, grandfather—and thus, to his historical role.

The subject of the father could never be a neutral thing within the family—whose own fictions contradicted the documented proof all too clearly; cognitive processes clashed too violently with emotional ones; the friction between family loyalty and general historical attitudes proved all too unpleasant.

Malte Ludin’s film is a document as well as a monument. It takes the silence, the glossing-over and repression which marked the family history for 60 years, and turns it into a productive thing, by pursuing the subject offensively and working out and contrasting its differences. He cannot, nor does he want to be, a neutral—let alone a self-righteous—observer; rather, he introduces himself as a protagonist in the project he initiated. It is a project which stirs up conflicts, injuries, and pain in all those affected, including himself, even after all this time.

In this context, face-to-face meetings with his father’s victims seem like self-imposed tests. They are key moments in the film. *2 or 3 Things I Know About Him* is a counterpointal and many-voiced debate on historical and family truth. This is the first time the entire family of a prominent Nazi has been prepared to deal with the past in this way.

A highly emotional testimony from those born after the war, the second and third generation. Private and yet a telling example. For how many other German families are there in which the postwar processes of memory would have been any different?

The Family

Hanns Elard Ludin (1905 – 1947)?

Friedrich, his father, a senior grammar school teacher

Johanna, his mother, a painter

Erla, nee. von Jordan, his wife (1905 – 1997)

Erika (Eri), his eldest daughter, a photographer (1933 - 1998)

Barbara (Barbel), his second daughter, a book dealer (b. 1935)

Ellen, his third daughter, a journalist (b. 1937)

Tilman (Tille), his eldest son, a businessman (1939 – 1999)

Malte, his youngest son, a filmmaker (b. 1942)

Andrea (Drell), his youngest daughter, a gallery owner (b. 1943)

Heiner, Eri’s husband, (divorced)

Alexandra, daughter of Eri and Heiner

Heiner jun., son of Eri und Heiner

Astrid, daughter of Tilman und his wife Esther

Fedor, Ellen’s husband

Fabian, son of Ellen and Fedor

Ada, daughter of Ellen and Fedor

Elmar, Barbel’s husband

Benita, daughter of Barbel and Elmar

Garan, her husband

Malte jun, son of Barbel and Elmar
Who Was Hanns Elard Ludin (1905 – 1947)?

“Ludin [who had served as an officer in the German army until 1930,] joined the Nazi party in 1930 and the SA (Sturmartellung; Storm Troopers) in 1931. He was among a group of prominent SA men who survived the "Night of the Long Knives" of June 1934 and were appointed ambassadors to Germany's eastern European allies and satellites during World War II.

[Ludin became Germany's ambassador to Slovakia on September 13, 1941,] ... before his appointment a system of German advisers had already been established. These German advisers, such as Dieter Wisliceny for Jewish affairs, received their instructions and salaries from their superiors in Berlin, and used the German embassy as little more than a convenient postbox.

In February 1942, however, Ludin conveyed to the Slovak government Heinrich Himmler's request for 20,000 strong, young Jews to work in the east ... In late March he again relayed a German request, for the deportation of all the remaining Slovak Jews, and reported back that the Slovak government had agreed "without any German pressure." [In April 1942, Ludin headed negotiations on the whereabouts of Jewish property. When growing Slovak reluctance brought the deportations to a near standstill that June, Ludin expressly called for the removal of all Jews.] Further negotiations concerning the deportation of Slovak Jews were left in the hands of the Jewish adviser, Wisliceny, and then of the Foreign Office troubleshooter, Edmund Veessenmayer, in 1943, but without result. Following the Slovak national uprising in 1944, however, the SS carried out further deportations, for which Ludin provided diplomatic support. Ludin was tried in Czechoslovakia in 1946 and executed in Bratislava in 1947.”


"When Ludin, ambassador to Slovakia, heard the news that the Jews of Slovakia, evacuated on the wishes of the Slovak Tiso government, had been taken instead to a death camp, he shouted out in his native Baden dialect, which he dropped into at emotional moments: "It's a downright disgrace!" I knew Ludin well enough to believe his outrage was genuine, but I was surprised. Unhesitatingly, I had included him in the phalanx of men who, as a consequence of their faith in the National Socialist idea, were willing to methodically and boldly and cold-bloodedly carry out any task in the service of realizing that idea.” (Translation from Der Fragebogen, p. 637)

"I said urgently: ‘But you were only questioned as a witness!’ Ludin looked at me ... He said, without raising his voice: 'I was the Reich's ambassador to Slovakia. The Slovaks trusted the Reich. I have taken the responsibility of everything that happened in Slovakia upon myself.' ... I said pitifully: ‘Ludin, how did it happen?’ Ludin said matter-of-factly: 'I made my statement, they read it at once, one handed it on page by page to the other. When they were finished, the lieutenant said: You know that this is your death sentence? What was I supposed to reply? I said nothing. Then I had to wait alone in my room. They brought me coffee and cigarettes, but of course I didn't touch them. Then two officers came, they must have been from some central office of the CIC. They questioned me on the basis of my prior statements. But I couldn't change what I had written.' ... 'I suppose I'll swing,' he said quietly.” (Translation from Der Fragebogen, p. 649f)

--- Ernst von Salomon, Der Fragebogen (The Questionnaire) © 1951 Rowohlt-Verlag Reinbek

A former Free Corps soldier who spent five years in prison during the Weimar Republic for his involvement in the assassination of Walther Rathenau, Ernst Von Salomon used the 131 questions on the U.S. de-nazification authority's form as a basis for a book highlighting events in his life. Published in 1951, the 600-page tome became one of first postwar bestsellers. The last one hundred pages include von Salomon's meeting with Hanns Ludin in an American internment camp.
**Malte Ludin (Director)**

Born 1942 in Bratislava (CSR)

Finished school at Schloss Salem/Lake Constance
Studied political studies in Tübingen and at the Otto Suhr Institut, FU Berlin. 1968 diploma in political studies.

1969-1970  Work Experience at Radio Station Sender Freies Berlin

1970-1974  Studies at the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB)
--Diploma film: *Kennen Sie Fernsehen?*, which opened the XXIV Internationale Mannheimer Filmwoche 1974

Since 1976
Freelance Author and Filmmaker, Including:
--Producer at Polyphon Film, Studio Hamburg
--Lecturer at the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie (DFFB)
--FFA scholarship at Pro Video, Berlin & Third Coast Studios Austin, Texas, USA
--Tutor at the DFFB

Since 1990
Managing Partner in Svarc.Filmproduktion, Berlin

**Publications**

- Essays on Joris Evens, Luis Bunuel, Charlie Chaplin, Siegfried Kracauer, Leni Riefenstahl (among others)
- Movie, TV, and book reviews for newspapers and magazines (Der Monat, Frankfurter Rund-schau, Frankfurter Hefte, Neue Zürcher Zeitung, medium, ZOOM, Deutsches Allgemeine Sonntagsblatt among others) and radio (SFB, Rias, SWR, WDR),
- Radio features and reports (SFB, SWR, WDR)
- Book: WOLFGANG STAUDTE, Rowohlt Verlag

**Films (Selection)**

2 ODER 3 DINGE, DIE ICH VON IHM WEISS* (2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM)
Documentary, screenplay & directing, Deutschland

1/4 BLUES
Documentary video, screenplay & directing, production 2003

ALS GROSSVATER RITA HAYWORTH LIEBTE* (WHEN GRANDPA LOVED RITA HAYWORTH)
Feature, producer, 1999/2000

BLICK AUS DEM FENSTER
Children's feature, producer, ZDF 1995
Golden Gate Award, San Francisco 1995 among others

BÖHMISCHE DÖRFER
Screenplay & directing, production, short feature, Czech Republic, 1995
International Documentary Festival Munich 1996
International Documentary Festival Oberhausen 1995,
International Film Festival Karlovy Vary 1995

MULO, EINE ZIGEUNERGESCHICHTE
Children's feature, producer, ZDF 1993
Prix Futura 1993

SCHALOM TATJANA

KEINE EXPERIMENTE. FILMZENSUR IN DER ÄRA ADENAUER
Documentary, screenplay & directing, production, ZDF 1989

DIE FRAU SEINES LEBENS
Short feature, producer, Rom, Villa D’Este 1990
Bundeskurzfilmpreis 1991, among others

KAREL CAPEK
Short feature, screenplay & directing, Czech Republic, WDR 1990
LiteraVision, Munich 1991

JOHN CHEEVER
Literary film portrait, screenplay & directing, WDR 1990

WITOLD GOMBROWITZ
Literary film portrait, screenplay & directing, WDR 1990

KEINE EXPERIMENTE. FILMZENSUR IN DER ÄRA ADENAUER
Documentary, screenplay & directing, production, ZDF 1989

VIDEOBRIEF AUS BUENOS AIRES
DokumentarHi-8, screenplay & directing, Argentina,
ARD 1987
XXXVIIIth Berlin International Film Festival Berlin,
TRÜMMERFILME
Documentary, screenplay & directing, ZDF 1986
FABRIK ZUM SELBERMACHER
Documentary, screenplay & directing, WDR 1985
ZOOM INS UNGEWISSE
Documentary, screenplay & directing, SFB 1983
FLUSSLANDSCHAFT UND NASSSES GRAB
Feature, screenplay & directing, ARD 1983
DAS DONNERNDE GESCHÄFT
Feature, screenplay & directing, ARD 1983
MAYERS TRAUM* ODER DAS KUNSTWERK IM
ZEITALTER SEINER TECHNOLOGISCHEN
REPRODUZIERBARKEIT
1 inch video, screenplay & directing, ARD 1982
Preis der Photokina Cologne 1982
1.Metropoles Film- u. Videofestival Munich 1983
DIE REVOLUTION FINDET NICHT IM KINO STATT
Film essay, screenplay & directing, WDR 1979
STABILE PREISE
Observations on the Adolf-Grimme competition,
Feature,
Co-Author & Co-director with R. Hoffmeister, ZDF
1978
KEIN UNTERTAN
Wolfgang Staudte und seine Filme" 
Documentary, screenplay & directing, ZDF 1977
ENERGIE FÜR EURO 9
Documentary, screenplay & directing, ZDF, 1976
KENNEN SIE FERNSHEN?
Satire, screenplay & directing, DFFB diploma film,
Opening film at the Internationale Mannheimer
Filmwoche 1973
PARTNERSCHAFT
Satire, screenplay & directing, DFFB 1972
Internationale Mannheimer Filmwoche 1973

An interview with Malte Ludin

You introduce the story of 2 or 3 Things I Know About Him with the following commentary: “This is the story of my father, a war criminal, my mother, my brother and sisters, my nieces and nephews. A typical German story.”

What do you think is typical about it?

I think that keeping silent about a considerable period of their life is a common thing among the parents of my generation. These historical and biographical omissions are still causing repercussions and uncontrolled dynamics to the present day. With this film, I have pursued a very personal project, but the story goes far beyond the private—beyond my family. What I have to tell may be found —perhaps not so extremely— in very many other, perfectly normal German families.

Your mother is no longer alive. Was it an important consideration for you—whether she would have given the film her blessing?

Not for nothing do I say at one point in the film that I would probably not have dared to make this film as long as my mother was alive. It's likely that, had she still been alive, I would have faced some of the conflicts less directly—because there would have been a danger of splitting the family otherwise. The strange thing is: my mother supported the idea of making this film. Because we had often argued over this matter, she was well aware what I thought of the questions surrounding my father; but I think it was unspokenly obvious for her and her view of the world that I would feel duty bound to portray—if not a rehabilitation—then a view of things conforming to the family’s interests. Coming from that kind of emotional situation, I did not rush to start this project.

It was presumably part of the “unspokenly obvious” for her that the guilty verdict and death sentence on your father by the war crimes court in 1946 was not legitimate and not right.

My mother was absolutely definite that her husband was condemned completely unjustly and that he was a noble, even “true-hearted” Nazi. This is the point of view she put clearly in a television interview with Christian Geissler in 1978 and which I cite in my film. But perhaps she thought that it had not been made clear enough even then. It took me a very long time to realize that my mother tried to protect the image—or should we say, memory of her husband—her whole life long. In fact, she always worked towards cementing the myth first
formulated in Ernst von Salomon’s “Fragebogen” (Questionnaire), and where it says, for instance: “He told me he took his task as ambassador to Slovakia very seriously. It was a very difficult task, but he had always felt an inclination towards the Slavic peoples—far more than towards the rotten West—and he said he was proud that it was him who had succeeded, as he believed, in protecting the Slovaks to a large degree from all the things that would have led inevitably to ill-will in the course of the occupation and the war.”

There is another interview with your mother in the film …

I recorded it myself, a year before her death.

Did you intend then to use it in the context of a bigger project?

Yes, back then I had the feeling it might be my last opportunity to speak to her about it again. To be honest, I was not very courageous in the way I went about it. And I also suspected that my mother was by far the more political of the people in the relationship.

And you make that suspicion very clear. You let your mother speak at length three times. One time, when she is talking about your father’s time in the SA, she tells us that he sometimes had scruples and feelings of doubt; then she finishes by saying that she comforted him by telling him: to make an omelet, you have to break eggs.

I’m pretty sure that she gave him a great deal of strength, and that also means in a way, always brought him back to his senses...

What is the general state of material and archives on your father like? Have many signi-ficant new facts come out which would be relevant for a revision of the verdict back then, or which may even serve to support it?

In the late fifties my mother took legal action against the Federal Republic of Germany because she wanted to sue for her civil servant’s widow’s pension. She only got a modest war widow’s pension, and I remember as a young man going to the Foreign Ministry library in Bonn to dig out all they had on my father and his life. It was all there, more or less nothing was missing—everything necessary for a decision in the Ludin case—but in those days I was not particularly interested in it. But because my mother filed all these documents neatly away in folders, I found them much later when I began systema-tic research for this film. As far as the facts go, I haven’t been able to find out much more that was new.

It was not just your mother—your sisters don’t seem to regard the question of guilt as having been adequately answered by documents or the trial, either. They either see it as a matter still open, or they have answered the question for themselves: not guilty! You portray your sisters as very interested, self-confident, and even critical women—I found that very surprising.

I think that if you try to get anywhere on this subject, you very quickly move into a realm far removed from rational or intellectual considerations. My sisters are all somewhat older than me, and that means they have—unlike me—conscious memories of our father. And on top of that, they were always geographically and emotionally close to my mother. That meant that her idealization strategy thoroughly rubbed off on them despite every possible rational or emotional resistance. I also believe that it was always very important for them to put their own views, attitudes, opinions last, so as to never leave our mother alone with her lifelong lie. That was and is and ever-present protective instinct.

You had a fourth sister who has passed away. It seems she had a slightly different attitude from your three other sisters.

I think my sister Eri felt her origins to be a burden. She lived in a permanent dilemma, not least because she was the eldest and knew our father best. On the one hand, she loved her father very much, but on the other hand, she had realized more and more that he was someone who was responsible for very bad things. Much of this realization came about through her husband Heiner, because among other things, he had studied in Berkeley and viewed German history very differently from the way it was usually seen in 1950s West Germany. On
top of that, she had a lot of Jewish friends, which contributed to this dilemma—between love and hate, between self-castigation and repression—always following her, certainly staying closer than she could stand.

You usually bring yourself in as a counterpoint to your sisters, but in two cases at least, you behave very similarly to them: for instance, when you explain in the commentary to your examination of records in Bratislava: I was silently hoping to find something which would have helped to reduce the burden of proof against him...

...A hope which unfortunately remained unfulfilled...

... and that pattern of behavior is even clearer, when you—as the child of a perpetrator—meet with the child of a victim, the writer Tuvia Rübner.

His parents and siblings were deported on the order of your father, the then German ambassador in Bratislava, and he himself only survived because his family had him taken to Israel at the start of 1941.

That sequence and my behavior were the cause of many an argument in the cutting room: it was very unpleasant for me to have to see how I myself use the very excuses and bolt holes I know so well when faced with a former victim. We spent a long time debating whether we should put it in at all, because obviously I am not a very good “actor” in that scene.

But regardless of considerations of the quality of the acting, the important thing here is surely credibility.

I felt that I could not be allowed to gloss it over, that I could not be allowed to make myself better than I am—even if it were a sin of omission in this case. I am not above it all, as my sister Barbel accuses me at one point. I am in it just as deep as she is. All I had was the good fortune to have a different socialization. On the one hand, I left the family’s sphere of influence early enough; but I am still a part of the clan.

What you have done on film, others have done in literature in the past year. To name just two: Monika Jetter’s “Mein Kriegsvater” and “In den Augen meines Großvaters” by Thomas Medicus. These works are both somewhere between the poles of an attempted reconciliation and the surveying of the given distance. Where would you put 2 or 3 Things I Know About Him on this scale?

Perhaps it is an attempt to do him justice. In the way my nephew Fabian says: “You don’t do my grandfather Hanns Ludin any favor by trying to rehabilitate him hastily. He stood by what he did, fair and square.

In the film, you describe different stages of your attitude towards your father: when you were a boy, your father was a hero, in the time around 1968—simply a Nazi criminal, and, as the last moment on this list, you say: “1969. The fall of the Berlin Wall. I met my future wife.” Your wife produced this film. What role did she play in this project?

She was a kind of permanent moral spur. As a Czech, she found it perfectly normal for me to be a German and therefore son of a Nazi, and it was clear to her from the start that this project was not about getting even. She has an ear for wrong notes, and she always noticed when something was askew. She always wanted to face it with her eyes open.

We had huge arguments when we talked about my father. For instance, I often exploded when she took the liberty—I felt—of saying bad things about him. I was allowed—but was she?

It was probably no coincidence that I fell in love with a woman from Czechoslovakia.

What sort of relationship do you have with your sisters now the film is finished, and more importantly, what sort of relationship do they have with you?

They haven’t seen the completed film, so I really can’t say. There’s a tense crackling in the air. Only my sister Barbel, who initially absolutely refused to go on camera, said she would rather not even see the film—so as not to jeopardize our relationship. Maybe there will be a fight. What will happen after that, I can’t imagine.

Interview by Ralph Eue
Iva Svarcová (Producer)

Iva Svarcová was five years old when the Prague Spring ended with the occupation by Warsaw Pact troops. Her parents left southern Bohemia, emigrating to West Germany. After studying languages (Spanish and English) in Munich and Madrid, Iva Svarcová worked as a translator and was accepted at the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin (DFFB) in 1985. Her teachers included István Szabo and Wim Wenders. Iva Svar-cová culminated her studies at the DFFB in 1990 with the short film DIE FRAU SEINES LEBENS, from the novel by Herbert Rosendorfer, for which she won the Bundesfilmpreis.

The first feature film she directed, ALS GROßVATER RITA HAYWORTH LIEBTE / KDYZ DEDA MILOVAL RITOU HAYWORTHOVOU (When Grandpa Loved Rita Hayworth) was shot in southern Bohemia, southern Germany, and Italy, using Czech and German actors. The jury awarded it the Max-Ophüls-Preis Wettbewerbs 2001 and it won the Preis der Internationalen Filmkritik, among others. It ran in Brazil, Australia, and the US and became one of Europe’s most successful bilingual films.

Iva Svarcová has been a partner in SvarcFilm private company since 1990.

2 or 3 Things I Know About Him is the first film Iva Svarcová has produced. Filming in Italy, Germany, Slovakia, the United Kingdom, and South Africa was difficult and exausting. “Her contribution to the realization of this film goes above and beyond the call of duty for a producer. Without her, I may never even have made it...” says Malte Ludin, who has been married to Iva Svarcová for ten years.

An interview with Iva Svarcová

In “Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern” (The inability to mourn), Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich write: “Of course the attempt to distance oneself from painful memories of guilt and shame is a general human need.”

It is one of their basic premises. Working from there, they examine the function and effects of these defense mechanisms. And that was also our intention in this film. 2 or 3 Things I Know About Him is a purely emotional film, a family drama. It is not a historical film—it is about what happens emotionally in the small world of a family when it attempts to opt out of history. How do the members of the family deal with it—or fail to deal with it—when their own history and the actions of their father, a condemned and executed war criminal, is glossed over or reinterpreted.

The strain it put on Malte Ludin to break out of this reflex, to confront oneself and one’s family with these emotional facts, that is something no-one can even imagine, because no-one has tried to do it on film before.

You say confrontation. Was that the motivation for this project?

On the contrary. We were not aiming for a break or a tug, a sudden shift. It was important that the whole family agreed to join in the making of the film. Obviously it wasn’t a walk in the park, because it can’t be anything but painful for someone to be forced to confess: I had a father, I loved him, maybe he was good to me; on the other hand, he was a murderer. This film shows us the effort and the courage behind such an admission. I feel that anyone who has a drop of feeling will have at least some respect for the ruthlessness and consistency with which the director also puts himself in the firing line, where one is no longer on the safe ground of opinions and statements—where one can only reveal one’s own ambivalence. In his meeting with Tuvia Rübner, a holocaust survivor, Malte Ludin introduces himself and says: I am the son of Hanns Ludin, who was there and there in 1941 and had such and such a function. And then Tuvia Rübner replies: so he was the one who killed my entire family. Obviously it is very hard to deal with a situation like that. But it is important and right that this scene can be observed in the film, uncut, just as it played out. I have never seen anything like it in a film, that the child of a perpetrator voluntarily and on his own initiative faces up to the child of a victim, and that these two men talk. It is a huge emotional achievement for both of them. They could have shot one another.

How did you fill your three “victim roles”?

I found Professor Stern and Mrs. Alexandrova in Bratislava. It is not easy to find a victim who is prepared to enter into a discussion with a perpetrator. Malte Ludin found Tuvia Rübner himself. The main task we set...
ourselves in the choice of protagonists was finding people who are still able to report authentically, instead of those who—because they have told the story so often—have created their own reality, which they put up between their feelings and the things they experienced. A few days ago I was asked why we have Tuvia Rübner read the poem he wrote about his little sister. A question I simply can’t understand, because—even at age 75—he constantly has the image of his little sister in mind, who was too small to go to Palestine with him because it was considered too dangerous, but who was not too small to be murdered in a gas chamber in Auschwitz. That has followed him his whole life long.

What considerations went into the setup of pictures for the interviews?

We spent a long time discussing it with the cameraman, Franz Lustig, and then decided on the difficult way—of filming it all by hand. I find every twitch and every jolt of the camera very important. We couldn’t imagine the sisters wrestling and battling with themselves while we watch in beautifully set up pictures. The only exception is the interview with Barbel. That was shot completely from the tripod for one simple, pragmatic reason—she didn’t want anyone else in the room but Malte, because she was afraid of losing control of her emotions. So we set up the shot, switched on the camera. Only later did we realize that this static situation matched her very well. She really is very immobile, inside as well as outwardly.

Have you or Malte Ludin had to face the accusation of being unpatriotic, of fouling your own nest?

An accusation like that doesn’t really bear any weight, because it is very obvious that Malte’s efforts are more about trying to create understanding than spreading poison or accusing anyone of anything. His sisters may have been annoyed by his insistence, but Malte is not an enemy to them.

2 or 3 Things I Know About Him is about how his sisters suffer just the same as he does because of what their father did, but they try to find various forms of negation, reinterpretation, concealment so they can live with it. With this film, we decided to observe these processes, withstand them, and reflect upon them. This film has taught me that there is a huge difference between cognitive and emotional knowledge. You may know something and yet not know it. The film demonstrates that. All the members of the family know everything. They have seen the files, and we ourselves know everything, too; but still, we react in a quite different way.

Observing psychological processes or even setting them in motion appears to be a major concern in this project.

The fact is, that in the Ludin family—and it is just an example for many other families—no-one has been honest enough to face the facts of what grandpa or daddy did during the Nazi regime. What does this omission—which did not happen by chance, but was systematic—do to those who live with it? And because our intention turned the spotlight directly on the emotions of the protagonists, we had a psychological counselor with us.

What was his task?

Support and counseling. For instance, during shooting it sometimes all became emotio-nally too much—because we weren’t just outwardly dealing with a subject; literally every-one—including us, the people working with us, and the protagonists—had to battle with what the film was about. Instinctively, we developed defenses, backed away, or felt fear and aggression. When Barbel said in the film, ‘I’m not the child of a perpetrator, the sound engineer simply wasn’t there, that is, we only had the sound the camera picked up. The most insane things happened. Sometimes, the cameraman Franz Lustig simply couldn’t stand the way Malte kept insisting because he felt himself under interrogation. It was intensely interesting. And later, in the cutting room, deciding what to leave in and what to take out, we needed supervision as well. Psychological counseling was simply essential for navigation in this crucial test between loyalty to the family and loyalty to the truth.

Why do the sisters fight so hard against calling themselves the children of a perpetrator?

I think the film shows that it is not that simple! Or do you know anyone who would just take that step without thinking? 2 or 3 Things I Know About Him very clearly reveals the central, key role of mothers. What options did Malte’s mother have after 1945 or 1947, after the father had been executed by strangulation? She had two options: to be the widow of either a war criminal or of a hero. And of course, she chose to be the widow of a hero. And she impressed that belief—that he was a hero—deeply on her children, her daughters especially. In the television interview she gave Christian Geisler in 1978 it becomes clear that she had retained her view up
until then. She is not really remembering in that interview, she wraps him up in her upper-class charm. For me personally, that was the shocking and at the same time enlightening thing about the material—that even thirty years later, she cannot show a spark of sympathy or even suggest that perhaps there were things that were not right. No, she remembers that she once thought: “We should have locked up all the Jews because they do us so much damage from abroad,” and that attitude always remained current in her.

*Would it have been possible for the sisters to go to Bratislava with you?*

Of course we tried to convince them to come with us to Bratislava. We wanted to take a little walk through the district where they grew up, and we wanted to go to the cemetery where the father is buried. But that proved to be absolutely impossible. At the end of the film, Malte stands alone by the grave. That is sad, but nevertheless, he has been able to take this step, and he has asked his nieces and nephews, and they all had the chance to have their say. There is an amazing dynamic in the family. Something has been opened up, and the following generations will be able to choose between Barbé’s interpretation and Malte’s interpretation, and that alone makes it all worthwhile. As Astrid, the daughter of Malte’s dead brother says, “I am doing this for my son. I don’t want him to spend his whole life trying to find something out and not know where he’s at, like I did.”

*Did you have the feeling that the Ludins are hoping that this history is sixty years old now, a long time ago. And if it is still a bit too bad, then we’ll simply wait another ten years, and then hopefully the problem will have solved itself.*

Of course it is a common thing—not just among the Ludins—to say: Enough already, I don’t want anything more to do with it. That sounds as if one had spent years debating it intensely. But the fact is, those who say things like that are usually the ones who have never faced up to the debate at all. I think the extent of the Hitler disaster is also documented in the fact that, sixty years after the end of the war, a perfect example like the fate of Hanns Ludin still plays such an acute and extremely controversial role among his children and their children. In Malte’s family, nothing has been finished with and no-one has forgotten.

Interview by Ralph Eue

**Franz Lustig (Camera)**

German cameraman. Born in Freiburg/Breisgau. When he was given a Super 8 camera at age eleven, he quickly decided to work with cameras when he grew up. In 1991 he was in the first intake of students at the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg. He finished his studies in 1995. Since 1994 he has been working as director of photography for advertising (including ads for BMW, Pepsi Cola, DHL), music groups (including Die fantastischen Vier), short films, documentaries, and feature films (including *Hommage à Noir, Land of Plenty*).

"Malte Ludin’s 2 or 3 Things I Know About Him came at a time in my career when I needed to move into a new field and needed the advertising, for balance and as training for my eye. On every project, regardless of genre, I try to understand the thinking and the view of the director. What was interesting about this project was that a filmmaker like Malte takes on his own family history. What a chance. But what courage as well. It meant that, even as a nonmember of the family, I had to fit into the not always easy—sometimes almost hostile—constellations, as an observer. And since you are pretty much in the front row, the cameraman feels the force of the most direct vibrations. We did most of the interviews in long settings, in which my hand-held camera was able to react quickly to the mood. Usually, one tape ran through, then another, and so on. I sometimes felt like a tai-chi dancer who has worked it all out for himself beforehand. It was rigorous but meditational. A cameraman should join consultations and help development. The decision to do all the interviews on DV (PD 150) and the other parts on 35mm had already been taken. Cinematographically, I thought it was important to give the other components of the film a different aesthetic. Using my contacts with various advertising productions, we were able to do that on 35mm using an Arri IB. It was important to me that the film could give other “perpetrator’s families” the impulse to address the subject and maybe loosen some tensions. I think documentaries are the most fascinating films of all. They require a very direct, intuitive, creative care. I can only confirm that all the genres should enrich each other, and hope more interesting documentary projects will come my way.” - Franz Lustig
**Werner Pirchner (Music)**

Austrian composer (1940 – 2001). Starting in 1962, Werner Pirchner worked as a freelance jazz musician (with Harry Pepl, Jack DeJohnette, Steve Swallow, Bobby McFerrin, Albert Mangelsdorff and many more) and composer for theater and film. He also worked as a classical concert artist (e.g., for the Vienna Burgtheater, Salzburg Festival, Jean-Luc Godard, Ernst Kovacic, Wiener Schubert Trio, Vienna Brass, Ensemble Kontrapunkte Wien). His LP *Ein halbes Doppelalbum* (1973) brought accusations of unpatriotic “fouling his own nest,” to which he replied with the lyrics:

“Solang ein vaterländisch’ Herz /schlägt unter deinem Hemde /besudle nicht das eigne Land /besudle lieber fremde.” (As long as a patriotic heart/ beats under your shirt/ don’t foul your own nest/ foul other people’s)

In 1973, his songs were banned at the same broadcaster—Österreichischer Rundfunk—which, twenty years later, invited Werner Pirchner to write all the jingles for the culture station Ö 1. In his obituary on August 10, 2001, the magazine *Jazzpodium* wrote: “His music was often regarded as direly unpatriotic (particularly in Tyrol). But we should not forget that, strangely, it is not the one who cackled who is denounced as a nest fouler; it is the one who says, it stinks in here.”

Pirchner named another work “EU,” in line with his dilemma. The title succinctly describes what he once called his tightrope walk between the chairs of E-music (classical) and U-music (entertainment). “That puts Pirchner in the fine enlightenment tradition which goes from Karl Kraus to Milan Kundera, and in music from Hans Eisler to Mauricio Kagel” (Thomas Rothschild).

“In my youth I oriented myself towards the latest jazz. Exploring the theories of Schönberg, and above all, looking at Bach’s sonatas for solo violin, later opened up new paths of expression. Out of respect for the great masters, I didn’t dare write a single note for a classical concert until my 42nd year. As a composer, jazz musician and privileged temporary worker, I tried (a) to express my ideas and feelings in dimensions accessible to me (various LPs of compositions, two films, a few texts and drawings, among other things), and (b) to influence the interplay of red and black on my bank statements. One fine morning, the violinist Peter Lefor phoned me up to tell me he had put a piece for solo violin by me on the program of his next ORF concert. Thus, I felt my way gingerly ... down the road I am on today. I try to write music which expresses what I am thinking, feeling ... and am, right now. Or the opposite.” -- Werner Pirchner
Credits

Screenplay, director: Malte Ludin
Camera: Franz Lustig
2nd camera: Birgit Gútjonsdóttir
           Martin Gressmann
Camera assistants: Jörg Göner (Berlin)
                   Martin Ciaran (Bratislava)
                   Markus Zucker (Berlin)
Lighting: Tom Gork (Stuttgart)
Sound: Pavol Jasovsky (Bern)
       Hugh Graham (London)
       Jochen Hergersberg (Berlin)
       Arthur Koundouris (Johannesburg)
       Zoltan Ravasz (Munich)
       Oliver Jergis (Munich)
       Alexander v. Zündt (Munich)
Rough cut: Hanka Knipper
          Amos Ponger
Consultants: Gabriele Draeger
             Raimund Barthelmes
Editing: Malte Ludin & Iva Svarcová
Music: Werner Pirchner
       Hakim Ludin
       Jaroslav Nahovica
Sound design and mixing: Matthias Lempert
Title design: Birk Weiberg
Editors: Vera Meyer-Matheis (SR),
        Gudrun Hanke-El Ghomry (SWR)
        Ulle Schröder (Arte)
Producer: Iva Svarcová
Sponsored by: BKM – Die Bundesbeauftragte für Kultur und Medien
              FFA-Filmförderungsanstalt
              Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg
              Filmfonds Wien
              Medien- und Filmgesellschaft Baden-Württemberg
Excerpts from: Die Frau seines Führers, Christian Geissler, dir. NDR 1978
Film by: Svarc. Film Gbr
Co-produced by: Hessischer Rundfunk, Esther Schapira
               Saarländischer Rundfunk
               Südwestrundfunk
               in co-operation with ARTE
Phases of the Project

Research  
Research was carried out between 1996 and 2001 in Prague, Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Berlin, Stuttgart

Scripts/Financing  
There were several drafts from 1998 onwards; a finished script in 2000, a workable treatment in 2001. Project development funding from the MFG in Stuttgart played a large role in pushing the project. After the treatment was passed by the BKM jury in 2000, Malte Ludin reworked an important aspect of it (the narrator’s perspective) in 2001 on the advice of the editors from the Filmboard Berlin-Brandenburg 2001. The deciding approval of funds from the Filmboard went through in 2001. Esther Schapira and Georg Hafner ("Die Akte Brunner") of Hessische Rundfunk showed an interest in the project and joined it in 2001 as co-producers. They were able to pull in as consultants Vera Meyer-Matheis of SR and Gudrun El Ghomry of SWR along with financial support from their broadcasting organizations. The FFA and Filmfonds Wien also supported the project.

Filming  
Began in February 2002 and continued, with many interruptions, until June 2002. The film was shot in Munich, Podere Tugliano, Italy, Bratislava and other locations in Slovakia, London, Johannesburg. In July 2003, filming in Kremsmünster, Austria, which had been postponed a year before, went ahead.

Post-production  
Interviews in the film were recorded in video format 16 : 9 on a DVCAM, as this proved to be the best way of getting the content. Other parts were filmed for formal reasons on 35 mm, 1 : 1.85. This decision caused a lot of problems in post-production. The saying that turning a video-based project into something for the big screen will have post-production costs far exceeding the production costs turned out to be true.

Editing and montage were carried out using FCP 3.X, then work was continued on AVID-Symphony.

The cinema version was copied in several steps onto Digibeta color corrected and projected onto HD or 4 K. The original copy was finished in October 2004.

On the history of Slovakia (1938 – 1946)

"In the foreign policy of the Weimar Republic, Czechoslovakia was a subordinate variable; behind the scenes, at least, the arrogance of a state still regarding itself as a Great Power dominated attitudes towards its little neighbor. German interests in Czechoslovakia were limited to the revision of the status quo created by Versailles, the German minority, and economic ties. In German-Czechoslovak relations, Slovak aspects did not even arise.... Seen thus, the word “Tschechei” is a consistent product of German perception: The Slovaks do not get a mention, and the Czechs are stereotyped negatively...."

"The Slovak state came into being by proclamation in the Slovakian parliament on March 14, 1939. Soon after that, the Slovak government signed two treaties—the treaty of protection and the secret protocol on economic and financial cooperation—which made Slovakia a ‘protectorate’ of the German Reich, and which opened up many new forms of influence for the “protecting” country, particularly in the areas of foreign policy and in economics. This kind of foundation led to the Slovak government frequently being referred to as a puppet government, and the state itself as a satellite state...."


Further Reading:

Jörg K. Hönsch, Geschichte der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, Verlag Kohlhammer 1978 (standard work)
Leni Yahil, Die Shoa. Überlebenskampf und Vernichtung der europäischen Juden, Luchterhand Verlag, 1998