

## DENAZIFICATION AND GERMANY AS A WANTON WOMAN: POST-WWII GERMAN REPRESENTATIONS IN AMERICAN MOVIES

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**Abstract.** Numerous studies indicate that since the sixties an obvious negative image of Germany has been developed in the media, as American literature and movies focused on the dark German past and its residues in the present. These studies claim that this trend was prevalent beforehand, even since WWI, in spite of many attempts to present a different attitude. The current article claims that the influence of the terminology of the Cold War, which started in 1946 with Churchill's famous speech in the US<sup>1</sup>, triggered in fact in the first Berlin crisis in 1948. Many movies have dealt with life in Germany and provided a thorough perspective on the cultural-political image and cinematic representations of Germans and Germany at this time. A major part of the movies dealt with attitudes, which opposed the inner American discussion about the future to foreign policy, reflecting the political relationship between the US and Germany through various representations of Germany and Germans. Although one cannot point out a consistent pattern of representation of Germans at that time, one can still indicate some outstanding characteristics. For instance, an obsessive reference to the Cold War and Berlin as its arena; denazification of German figures together with repeated attempts to go back to the Nazi demon; a large number of movies distinguished between Nazis and German soldiers; a satiric, grotesque, and sometimes witty and sharp representation of Nazis; and finally, a critical attempt to investigate Germany's past through the eyes of the Germans. We can conclude and say that the most outstanding characteristic of the German representation at that time was continuity versus change, i.e., traditional representations of Germans, which have actually become part of a stereotype, versus some new representations that distinguish between Nazis and German soldiers.

**Keywords:** representations of Germans, Nazis, Other Germans, Wanton Woman Denazification, Hollywood, US foreign policy, Isolationism, Intervention, Cold War.

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<sup>1</sup> Thousands of articles and books have been written about the historiographical division and the roots of the Cold War. The historiography of the Cold War can be divided into three groups: Christoff, Klassman discusses thoroughly different approaches of the research, the historiography of the Cold War and the situation in Germany after 1945 in both his articles: *Conquerors and Conquered: Common and Contrasting Characteristics*, pp. 48-68, and *The Cold War and the Division of Germany*, pp. 69-83, *The Germans: 1945-1990*, Oded Heilbrunner & Moshe Zimmerman (Eds.), Tel Aviv, 1998. There is also Fraser J. Harbutt's comprehensive book: *The Iron Curtain: Churchill, America, and the Origins of the Cold-War*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 183-285. And Margot A. Henriksen, *Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1997, pp. 16-17.

### *Introduction*

The American policy towards Germany was seen most clearly in 1947, after George Marshall replaced James F. Byrnes from South Carolina as Secretary of State in January 1947, with a great pressure to strengthen West Germany very quickly. On November 18, 1947 Marshall gave a speech, in which he specified, in very clear terms, the American position towards Germany: "Europe's reconstruction", he said, "goes hand in hand with Germany's reconstruction. No revival of the European economy will be possible without the revival of the German economy"<sup>2</sup>.

After 1945, the debate about isolationism versus intervention was reawakened in the US. At first, the assumption was that damage to the German industry would solve the German problem and enable the American army to get out forever from the continent. However, as the evacuation was delayed, the supporters of isolationism claimed that one had to limit and restrict America's foreign policy due to its increasing involvement in Europe's affairs. Therefore, in the first years after the war, American communication did not deal with the issue of Germany's reconstruction. The American public got the impression that the goal was to punish the Nazis and change the German society's way of thinking. Anyway, 1947 was a key year in global history and the beginning of a new era. The world that came out of the ruins of the war included terms like the Iron Curtain, the Cold War, the Arms Race and the Red Fear, which referred to the struggle between the two blocks – of the USSR and its satellite countries in Eastern Europe on the one hand, and the US and its allies in the West. In 1947, the tension between the two super-powers became an unconcealed hostility, which brought about the Cold War. This hostility did not necessarily stem from ideological reasons, but from motives of power and control. Germany was used, within this struggle, to provide meanings and interpretations to the events and atmosphere of the time. The American involvement in Germany since 1945, and much more so since the beginning of the Cold War and its strengthening along the years, demonstrated and defined the American global hegemony and determination to go on strengthening their involvement policy. This policy, together with the beginning of the Cold War (the Berlin crisis of 1948-9), can be seen in the change of attitude, from peace for Germany to the establishment of West Germany and making it a central partner in the Cold War and in the NATO alliance. Historians agree that the Berlin Crisis, with the siege and the aerial bridge in 1948, was a historical crossroad in which the war could have reignited, and it was a turning point in the American policy towards Germany. For these reasons, Germany was perceived as a case study of the new role of America in the world, with all the complications and compensations that came with the American involvement in Germany, indirectly expressed in the implications of the American role in Europe and the world as a whole.

The fifties were the toughest years of the Cold War. In the US itself, anti-communism reached its peak in the beginning of the fifties with a hysteria,

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Germany 1947-1949: The Story in Documents*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950, p. 12.

which threatened the basic rights of the American constitution. Senator Joseph McCarthy from Wisconsin, whose demagogic speeches put him in the front of the witch-hunt after the Reds in America, regarded every liberal or critical opinion as a betrayal against the country<sup>3</sup>. He got acquiescence from the Republican administration since this perception served the American policy and interests in the Cold War and was supported by wide circles of the public. An early significant exposure of this policy appeared in a speech Winston Churchill gave on March 5, 1946 in Westminster College, in which he blamed the USSR of being responsible for casting a shadow over the victory of the Allies. This speech is remembered mainly due to his vigorous claim that the Russians spread an iron curtain on Europe from the Baltic area in the north to the Adriatic area in the south. The response to Churchill's speech was mixed. The Americans, as indicated the historian William Leuchtenburg, were "not prepared to such a blunt language at the beginning of 1946", but public opinion in the US has changed drastically within a short period. The Cold War penetrated all aspects of life in America in the late forties and a major part of the fifties. Anti-communism inside the US focused on the issue of domestic security<sup>4</sup>. The fact that the USSR was considered America's sworn enemy in the Cold War blocked the possibility of considering the implications of this policy. The evil characteristics, which had been attributed to the Nazis, were shifted to the USSR, and at the same time, the German image was rehabilitated. Hence hundreds of films were produced at this time, films that dealt with all aspects of life in Germany more than any other representation, like the Japanese or the Russians. Hollywood has been considered, not only in leftist circles but also among some film scholars, as a branch of the administration, which distributes American propaganda and serves the goals of its foreign policy. In this article, I investigate this claim regarding the relations between Hollywood's movie industry and the American administration by focusing on the representations of Germany in Hollywood's films in a sensitive time in international relations and American foreign policy. At this time, dramatic fluctuations took place in foreign policy towards Germany.

The following movies focused on ideology-politics and described life during the occupation: *Berlin Express* (1948), *Foreign Affairs* (1948), *Big Lift* (1950), *The Devil Makes three* (1952), *Prosecution Witness* (1957), and *Fraulein* (1958). They dealt with the issue of foreign policy at the time and the events referred to

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<sup>3</sup> McCarthyism is a term about governmental persecution aimed at marking and punishing those who adhere to political positions that do not go in line with the administration, or are suspected of lack of patriotism in a democratic state, relying on hearsay and doubtful or insufficient evidence. The term was coined after Senator Joseph McCarthy, who led a vigorous anti-communist campaign from 1948 up to the mid-fifties, in which people from the media, the movie industry, the administration, the army and other occupations were suspected, due to controversial evidence, of having communist inclinations. There are many sources about this time, and the following provide a comprehensive survey of it: Victor S. Navasky, *Naming Names*, N.Y., Viking Press 1980; Lester Cole, *Hollywood Red*, Palo Alto, Ramparts Press, 1981.

<sup>4</sup> W. E. Leuchtenburg, *The Great Age of Change*, New York, 1964, p. 13; Geoffrey Perrett, *The Truman: Dream of Greatness: The American People*, New York, 1979, p. 119.

it by allegorizing foreign affairs to relations between American soldiers and German girls and by shifting the political drama into a romantic melodrama or a comedy.

After 1945, the debate about isolationism versus involvement reawakened in the US. At first, it was believed that damaging the German industry would solve the German problem and enable the American army to get out of the continent for good, but as the evacuation was delayed, the supporters of isolationism claimed that one should restrain the American foreign policy due to its increasing involvement in European affairs. Hence, Germany was perceived as a case study of the new American role in the world. The movies *Berlin Express* (1948), and especially *Foreign Affairs* (1948), illustrated what would happen if the US would go on with its involvement in Germany, reflecting disagreements in the administration as well as in American society. In the first years the issue of the American presence takes the form of a metaphor of conquering US and wanton Germany. This metaphor of the wanton woman is intended to say that Germany with its past might corrupt the US, which personifies the image of the conquering man, a man who is sometimes innocent and sometimes wanton.

In *Berlin Express* (1948), there is still cooperation between the super powers. The passengers, citizens from the conquered countries, board a train wagon heading to Berlin, each one to his district. Post-war Berlin is divided into four districts: under the control of the US, Britain, France and Russia. When the train arrives at Frankfurt, Bernhardt, a German peace fighter, is kidnapped by the German underground, which wants to prevent his arrival at the peace conference conducted by the Allies in Berlin. The movie deals with post-war Germany – the destruction, everyday life in divided Berlin, fear and disbelief that is common towards Germans and Germany, the relationships among Americans, British and Russians, and the will for peace and understanding. The presentation of German characters as well as the atmosphere expresses disbelief toward Germans and Germany. The German underground believes that a state of war is the ideal situation for Germany. As far as they are concerned, any means is possible if it helps achieving the goal. They use German citizens in order to get information and then they kill them, and for that goal, the underground members even kill one another. All scenes about the underground take place in complete darkness, with blurred faces, and everything looks dark and gloomy. It is located in cellars in Frankfurt. The German women, who have fun in the company of American soldiers, are described as feminine and attractive. This is the first instance that heralded the image of the wanton German woman, who appeared in numerous movies in the fifties, an image that is not accidental, referring to Germany's wantonness as well as an impossible connection between Germany and the US.

In Billy Wilder's movie *Foreign Affairs* (1948), Marlene Dietrich personifies the figure of Erika von Schlotov, a singer in a nightclub with a Nazi record. Officer John Pringle gives Erika, with whom he has a love affair, a mattress he purchased in the black market, and as he drives in the bombed streets, we hear on the soundtrack the tune: Isn't it romantic? Which is quite ironic with all the

destruction around. Post-war Berlin is not a place to nurture romantic illusions, as Erika sings in the nightclub. Erika<sup>5</sup> represents the German character and looks for support. Hence, she might turn to whoever would manage to support her better, that is, she goes with the one who pays more, and if the USSR would pay more, Germany would go with it. *Foreign Affairs* (1948) refers to the issue of American involvement, trying to see what would happen if America would be involved too much in corrupted Germany. It supports isolationism and raises the question: what is the best American approach to the German issue? What is the best policy for dealing with Germany? Different suggestions come up. The ones in favor of isolationism were afraid, like Pringle the hero, of entering a complication and damaging American freedom of action. In short, American foreign policy would be restricted and cause endless complications. There is an apprehension that a too large involvement in Germany's affairs might endanger the US due to German wantonness, which, just like Erika<sup>6</sup>, might turn to the one who provides her the biggest support. For instance, when Pringle investigates Erika about her Nazi past, she answers him with a hint: "women adopt everything that is fashionable", to which Pringle responds: "Yes, one time it is a hat, another time a swastika, and now the colors red, white and blue, and later maybe a hammer (the symbol of the Russians)". Pringle expresses here the American apprehension that Germany might turn from supporting Nazism to supporting communism. Erika, who serves as a metaphor of Germany and the Germans, is described as a weak, unreliable and cynical feminine figure who has a potential of threat. The German cunning in Erika's complicated figure is expressed in her survival competence. She is cynical and not romantically anymore. She used to be the mistress of a senior Nazi, was in Hitler's environment, suffered from the war, but her determination and seductive sexuality kept her alive along the occupation. This history is expressed in the song *Berlin's Destruction*, which refers to the ghosts of the past, the song *All Your Sufferings*, which refers to the shortage after the war, as well as the song *Your Sweet Tomorrow*. These songs expressed hope, and even a prophecy of a possible recovery that actually took place with the economic boom in Germany in the fifties.

The allegorical dimension is built into the movie gradually, and each character symbolizes certain characteristics. The symbols of the four main characters are:

Captain John Pringle symbolizes America.

Congress member Phoebe Frost symbolizes the American puritanism and the opposition congress. Her Puritanism is expressed in her support of isolationism and non-involvement of American soldiers with the locals (especially women), and finally she changed her attitudes, which presented an option of moderation and compromise among the various approaches.

<sup>5</sup> At first, Dietrich refused to do this character out of fear that her anti-Nazi image might be damaged by presenting the enemy as a brilliant figure. Robert D. Harris, *Billy Wilder's Germany: Germany in Films, Berlin in Films*, "Films in Review", Vol. XLI, No. 5 (May 1990): 292-297 (294).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

Colonel Plammer (Millard Mitchell) symbolizes Truman's administration, i.e., an American realpolitik person. He is a kind of a responsible adult in this world of adolescents, which means that he represents the right balance between involvement and isolationism (he is married and about to become a decent and serious grandfather).

Erika von Schlotov – ex-Nazi and a cabaret singer at the time of the movie, who symbolizes Germany.

The movie shows an interesting attitude towards the Soviets. The Cold War is there just as a vague threat, since when the film was done relations with them were still all right. So we see Russian and American soldiers go out together with German women, dancing both Russian and Western dances.

The relations between Pringle and Phoebe Frost demonstrate the infinite complications that come from involvement policy. Phoebe Frost (freezing), a Republican congress member from Iowa, played by Jean Arthur, demonstrates the apprehension of involvement: political embarrassment, moral corruption and getting involved in foreign affairs, which would prevent America from having its freedom, and hence, it cannot act according to its own views and beliefs anymore. Like Pringle, she loses her cultural-democratic superiority through her relations with Erika, and her deep personal involvement leads to the failure of her efforts to establish a reform in the occupied country. This is an obvious illustration of the supporters of isolationism.

Frost's sense of reality is the opposite of the illusions of Washington's administration. She finds out that an American captain is associated with Erika von Schlotov, a pretty and attractive singer who performs in one of Berlin's nightclubs, where the entrance for soldiers is forbidden. Erika, it is found out, was the girl of a senior Nazi officer, and was even seen with Hitler. Frost decides to ambush near Erika's place in order to catch her American friend. As this ambush goes on, she falls in love with John and they are engaged, and then Erika finds out that her friend, John Pringle, is Phoebe's fiancé. As a result, Phoebe leaves the committee and is about to go back to the States quite humiliated. It seems that John continued his relation with Erika according to his order by the military, as they wanted to bring the Nazi officer out in the open in order to catch him. At last, the Nazi officer is killed, Erika is sent to a work camp and Phoebe and John get married.

The movie demonstrates how soon former enemies become friends, and former friends become enemies. The Cold War established the conditions for a new and very different policy. The bomb and the Cold War created significant change in America, destroyed old images and created new ones about the involved parties: Americans, Russians and Germans. That is, the image of Russian and American soldiers as knights who fought to save humanity was destroyed.

It was quite ironic that Billy Wilder, the movie officer of the military administration in Berlin and commissioner of denazification and reorganization of the German movie industry, who arrived in Berlin, wearing US military uniform, as the representative of the ICD – Information Control Division<sup>7</sup>, should turn in this movie against the formal American policy towards Germany.

<sup>7</sup> David Culbert, (Document) *Hollywood in Berlin, 1945: A Note on Billy Wilder and the Origins of 'A Foreign Affair'*, "Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television", Vol. 8, No. 3, (1988): 311-316.

The ICD of the American military in Germany was interested in the movie so that it would explain to Europeans and Americans why the US is still on German land three years after the war. They wanted the movie to support their involvement policy as propaganda through entertainment, a movie which falls in line with the ICD policy: do not hate Germans.

As part of the production, Wilder talked to Berlin's inhabitants: from academicians to cab drivers and whores, for whom he felt both admiration and disgust. He called Berlin a crazy city that suffers from shortage and starvation. He aspired to reach authenticity, and therefore went to the black market and shot the destroyed city. He wanted the movie to be as documentary as possible, a historical document that reflects reality in Germany after the war, together with the immediate problems of its inhabitants and the American conquerors.

The American authorities were aware of the propaganda potential of movies and preferred to control the content and ideas of American movies as much as possible during WWII, and much more so after the war<sup>8</sup>. They understood that the end of the war was not enough in order to remove negative attitudes towards Germany and Germans and neutralize the German (Nazi) representation in Hollywood. Hence, it took significant efforts, both on the part of the administration and of Hollywood, to remove this established image<sup>9</sup>.

The administration thought that in light of the needs of the Cold War and the changing needs of foreign policy, it had to take an ideological focused line of action. Wilder's movie *Foreign Affairs* does not match the guiding books issued by the administration in 1942 and 1945. It presents the occupation soldiers as opportunists-materialists who aim for easy profits by controlling the black market and exploiting Berlin's inhabitants, while the re-education process is forgotten. The nightclub singer with her Nazi record emphasized this problematic reality<sup>10</sup>. Wilder criticizes the US for changing its attitude towards Germany while denying its negative past. Wilder had understood for a long time that the American soldier is no hero or herald of democracy.

Following the screening of the movie, the Ministry of Defense issued an announcement, saying that *Foreign Affairs* showed a false and distorted picture of the decent and honest occupation army. We can see an expression of the provocative nature of *Foreign Affairs* in Mike's words, an American soldier who calls the congress "a bunch of salesmen who put a foot in the wrong door".

In 1947, HUAC – House Un-American Activities Committee – issued an announcement with a challenge to the American movie industry: Hollywood has

<sup>8</sup> See President Roosevelt's letter from 1942, which was sent to the WAC – War Activities Committee that clearly defines the committee's activities, as well as annual reports for Hollywood for the years 1942, 1943, 1944, 1945 in addition to the establishment of various governmental authorities that controlled Hollywood after WWII and the beginning of the Cold War. I deal elaborately with these issues in section B of the introduction to the relations between the administration and Hollywood. K. R. M Short, *Documents (B) – Washington's Information Manual for Hollywood, 1942*, "Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television", Vol. 3, No. 2, (1983): 171-180; and *Hollywood: an essential war Industry, 1942*, "Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television", Vol. 5, No. 1 (1985): 90-92.

<sup>9</sup> Ralph Willett, *The Americanization of Germany 1945-1949*, London, New York, 1989, pp. 28-44 (p. 4).

<sup>10</sup> Ralph Willett, *Billy Wilder's 'A Foreign Affair' (1945-1948): the trials and tribulations of Berlin*, "Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television", Vol. 7, N.1, 1987, pp. 3-14 (p. 5.).

to demonstrate its patriotism<sup>11</sup>. The pressure by the administration and HUAC put their foot down so that at first Paramount prevented *Foreign Affairs* to be screened publicly. Finally, in spite of the criticism, it went out to the screens. This shows that Hollywood may give in to the pressures of the administration, but it is not its tool, and although some of the critics claimed that *Foreign Affairs* was inhuman, it had a big success in the box office. At the Fourth of July weekend, it broke the record of revenues<sup>12</sup>.

Stuart Schulberg, a member of the documentary department of the American prosecution in Nuremberg, attacked Wilder directly and the *Movie, Radio and Television Quarterly* (52-53) said that he was “rude, superficial and irresponsible”<sup>13</sup>. Herbert Luft, a refugee from Dachau, was furious because Wilder criticized the US, the symbol of freedom. He connected Wilder’s satire with Nazi philosophy, determining that the director had no connection with the American way of life.

Anyway, the movie reflected the debate between American society and old Germany, Hollywood and the administration. America’s role in the post-war world has become blurred: the concerns of the new world order bothered generations of Americans. America was born into a different, new, unclear world, and had to re-formulate its mission and role in the post-war world. Even if there were times of doubts, America has learned to ignore them. Some of the soldiers missed home and the American way of life so much that they did not want to see any other country but the States. Others were indifferent to the German suffering and showed only “an empty materialism and a lack of spiritual content”, in the words of diplomat George Kennan<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, the occupation forces, like many of the characters in Wilder’s movies, are presented as looking for easy and fast profits. *Foreign Affairs* sees re-education as a wrong thing to do.

*Foreign Affairs* ask if it is possible to keep Captain Pringle for the American woman and save him from the nightclub singer with the Nazi record. Would innocent Frost have the upper hand over sophisticated and cynical Erika? Does the total occupation of Germany serve as an expression of American democratic decency; and can America, in the image of Pringle, choose rightly between a dark woman with a Nazi record and a decent American woman, and between political opportunism and democratic decency? The real question is whether America would be able, like Pringle, to bring itself out of this strong involvement unharmed, while at the same time preserving its cultural superiority.

Erika is the key figure in the movie and through her decadence, wantonness and cunning Wilder achieves a double goal: a criticism of America that is easily captivated by Europe’s material charms on the one hand; and presenting Germany as a decadent, wanton and cunning country, on the other. At the same time, Wilder expresses a hidden criticism towards Hollywood, by breaking the familiar pattern of noble Americans and evil Nazis or Germans.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ralph Willett, *The Americanization of Germany, 1945-1949*, pp. 28-44, 38-39.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 5-34.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

Hollywood used to attribute to the German an obsessive nature with little room for human feelings. Billy Wilder presents the Germans in a different way, exposing the human aspects of Germans, and by so doing, express his personal view rather than the American foreign policy. In fact, even back in 1943, in the movie *Five Graves to Cairo*, he attributes cooperation to the population as a whole, but is not in favor of collective guilt<sup>15</sup>.

The movie *Big Lift* (1950) told the story of the aerial convoy that was sent to help Western Berlin at the time of the Soviet siege in 1948. It was the first big crisis of the Cold War, which caused an irreversible damage to the unity of the Allies in Germany and Europe, established new political conditions, brought about a new world order and increasing American involvement in Germany. While *Foreign Affairs* (1948) calls for isolationism and raises the option of disconnection between America and Germany and evacuating its forces, *Big Lift* (1950) factually claims that the attempt to disconnect America and Germany is too complicated, if not impossible, and hence, the option of evacuating the American forces from Germany is unreal, as *Foreign Affairs* did. The movie raises the question of how America can avoid serious damage, in light of its immense involvement in global affairs. It tries to find a formula that would deal with these fears, but it is far from the position of the supporters of isolationism. Unlike *Foreign Affairs*, it distinguishes between two kinds of Americans – moral and immoral, idealistic and non-idealistic. The two American figures, Danny McCullough (Montgomery Clift), a young innocent American, an airborne technician in logistic planes coming from the States to Berlin, and Kowalski, (Paul Douglas), a former POW, who had experienced harsh abuse on the part of German jailers, reflect contradicting attitudes towards Germany (involvement versus isolationism) in American society, Hollywood and the administration. In the course of their conversation, the issue of the German past comes up, and Kowalski says: “They don’t remember, of course, Warsaw, Rotterdam, Coventry, Lidica, Belzen, Dachau, Buchenwald; as if it all happened a thousand year ago”<sup>16</sup>.

At the beginning, Kowalski did not want to come to Berlin, and was full of anger and aversion towards everything German. As far as he was concerned, all Germans were Nazis and war criminals, including cab drivers. He has little appreciation for the Germans; he hates them and wants to make them feel that they were beaten in the war. He gets to know a local woman, Gerti, but he explains that this is part of his benefit of the loot of the war. He abuses Gerti and hurts her. McCullough arrives in Berlin with a will to turn over a new leaf with

<sup>15</sup> The film clearly refrains from painting the Nazis in black and the Allies in white, which is interesting in a film that was made during WWII. Schwegler (Peter Van Eyck), one of the central characters in the film, is not a stereotype Nazi, nor is he in any way a typical evil Nazi, and so is Field Marshal Rommel (Erich Von Stroheim) and the director does not present him as a one-dimensional caricature of Nazi megalomania. Billy Wilder. Director/screenwriter: *Five Graves to Cairo*. Produced by Paramount. 96 min. B/W.U.S.A. 1943.

<sup>16</sup> He refers to the aerial convoy (1948), when the “red threat” has become real and exposed the decision of Yalta Conference to dismantle Europe, which would be a disaster, as the Germans did not look human. The movie *The Big Lift* (1950) told the story of the aerial convoy that was established to help West Berlin during the soviet siege in 1948. It was the first big crisis of the Cold War. See Moshe Zimmerman, p. 133. *Hollywood and the representation of Nazi Concentration Camps in Real time*. “Cinema and Memory – dangerous relations? Life at the beginning”, Jerusalem, the Zelman Shazar Center for Israel History, 2004, pp. 133-151.

the German people. He is willing to accept the Germans as human beings rather than Nazi criminals. His belief in Frederica's honesty is complete until he finds out the truth about her. He falls in love with Frederica in spite of Kowalski's warnings, who recommends to McCullough to refer to Germans as he himself does, that is, to exploit Germany. McCullough thinks that one can change the Germans. When a German laborer pours a bucket of glue on him by mistake and he has to take his clothes for cleaning, he stops being different. Kowalski gets the situation and says sharply: "very soon you'll become a native". A process of de-Americanization accompanies McCullough's sentiment of identification with Germany and his love for Frederica. Kowalski changes from an unforgiving conqueror to an ambassador of good will, which reflects the approach of the American public towards Germany after the war. *Big Lift* dramatizes the relations between the US and Germany very clearly<sup>17</sup>.

Many scenes in the movie are cumbersome and a clear propaganda of the Cold War. It heralds Germany's new role as partner within the global American struggle against the red threat. The process Gerti goes through with Kowalski is opposite to the one McCullough goes through: he becomes increasingly detached from his Americanism in his affair with Frederica. It becomes obvious that Frederica takes advantage of McCullough. The movie reaches its inevitable peak when Kowalski proves to McCullough that Frederica lied to him about herself and the background of her family. Her father and her husband were Nazis, Frederica actually took advantage of him in order to get to America and join her husband who was there already, and so she removed him from being American. Anyway, Frederica's confession helps McCullough to see only the German suffering, but not Frederica's deceit. Danny has become a "native" and he sees everything through German eyes. In this way, he fails in his mission: instead of planting democracy in Germany, he is contaminated by moral deterioration. The emotional suffering and the loss of his moral innocence were the price he paid due to his uncritical involvement.

McCullough represents the fears of exploitation and loss of innocence of Americans who stay abroad. What had been a paranoia of the supporters of isolationism in Foreign Affairs became a careful approach of renovating relations in *Big Lift*. Similarly, the means of punishment at the beginning of the occupation have become a program of economic reconstruction of Germany. *Big Lift* presents a model of the American attitude towards Germany: between unforgiving fanaticism (Kowalski) and non-critical acceptance (McCullough). As long as the occupation goes on, one can distinguish a change in the Americans' attitude towards Germans and Germany. *Big Lift* becomes detached from the isolationist uncompromising perception of *Foreign Affairs*, and is in favor of careful involvement because an American withdrawal from Europe would leave the continent open to Soviet influence.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas George Schmundt, *Hollywood's Romance of Foreign Policy: American G.I.s and the Conquest of the German Fraulein: Politics in Films, Berlin in Films*, "Journal of Popular Film and Television", Vol. 19, Nr. 4 (1992): 192.

*Big Lift* (1950) tries to redefine the attitude towards Germany during the Cold War, as the former attitude (the attitude of the Secretary of State and the Minister of Defense) would damage the American interests in the world. At the same time, the movie expresses old fears of being too involved, and diminishes the cultural and political differences between Germany and the US. The American perception of Germany has changed in the battlefields of the Cold War. The Cold War removed any doubt regarding American involvement as a foreign policy, and even thoroughly changed the image of Germany within American perception.

Half a decade after the end of WWII, Germany is still conquered, militarily and ideologically. The Cold War, which was invisible, broke into open awareness in the Berlin Crisis and the aerial convoy between June 1948 and May 1949. The Soviet siege provided the hard line supporters in Washington with a perfect opportunity to dramatize the Soviet expansion aspirations. Germans stopped being the enemy and became an ally against the common enemy – the Soviets; this was the main reason for establishing a more positive image of Berlin inhabitants in particular and Germans in general, and this new position provided the Germans with the right to freedom and democracy.

The movie raises a few questions: can all the perceptions about the Germans as monsters be attributed to one woman, even if her husband used to be an SS person, or on one old man or a few children, or maybe this accusation refers to all Germans? Can one love a German woman? To make love to her and marry her? At that time, Hollywood still held the collective accusation perception. Certain circles in the studios objected to the drastic change in the German representation up to a real rehabilitation (Daniel Leab approach)<sup>18</sup>.

In the dialogue at the end of the movie between Daniel McCullough and Peter Kowalski, they say that there should not be any extreme opinion to either side, and one should not be innocent nor angry; if you will, Westemson program versus Morgenthau program, or rehabilitation versus punishment, positive representations versus evil characters<sup>19</sup>. This dialogue testifies, more than anything

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Leab addresses this issue at the end of his article (p. 65), claiming that Hollywood did not attack all Germans since the US did not see the German people as an enemy, only its leaders, as it had done in WWI, as the title of the article says: *The screen images of the 'other' in the Wilhelmine Germany and the US, 1890-1918*, "Film History", Vol. IX. No. 1 (1997): 49-70.

<sup>19</sup> There were two schools of thought among the decision makers of the American policy, who were involved in the debate about Germany and future relations between the US and Germany: one was represented by Henry Morgenthau Junior and his supporters, and the other was represented by people from the State Department like Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, and Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of Defense. Stimson claimed that vindictiveness towards the German nation would not serve the American interests, and dismantling the German industry would not help the plan of a new geopolitical organization, based upon economically independent republics in the American style. The Minister of Defense claimed that the best plan is to make the Germans American-like, and by so doing ensure Germany's support in future international struggles. Hull said that Morgenthau's approach, which was adopted by the president, has become somewhat more than a blind revenge, and the destruction of the German industry would destroy part of the European economy and would bring about negative implications for the future of Europe. Later on, it would hurt the essential American interests in the region. (The German economy had a big potential, and had the Americans destroyed what had been left of the German economy, rather than reconstructing, it would have made Germany a backward agricultural country, cause great damage to Europe, and hurt American essential interests. That is to say, that if Germany is strong so will Europe and the US be). In addition to the dangerous economic implications of dismantling the German nation, making it a nation of peasants, the State Department and the Ministry

else does, what would be the outcome of the debate between the administration and Hollywood and the complexity of the relationship between them. That means that Hollywood broadcast ambiguous messages, and hence the picture is not so simple and clear, as presented in different studies, which called for a unanimous opinion, demonstrating patriotism, comprehensive and collective purification of Germany, approval of foreign policy, and so on<sup>20</sup>.

The obsessive activity with wanton German femininity repeats itself in *The Devil Makes Three* (1952) that describes a neo-Nazi underground, which tricks an innocent American officer, Captain Jeff Eliot (Gene Kelly) and tries to take control over Germany again. The commander of the underground, Heisman (Claus Clausen), is a singer in a club during daytime and the commander at night. This is one of the outstanding Nazi characters in the film, presenting the Nazis in a ridiculous way as remnants of an old or imaginative time that had not really existed. It aspires to overthrow the government that was in power after the war and bring back the Third Reich. This kind of representation does not threaten the American interests.

The underground is spread in all strata of the German society. The main issue of *The Devil Makes Three* is the situation of two cultures, which used to be in conflict and now are integrated into one another and suffer inconvenience in the new situation. Like in *Foreign Affairs*, the German woman is presented as wanton through her connections with senior Nazis, and serves as a reminder of Germany's past. This pattern of German femininity as a model of Germany's wantonness and a reminder of its past is also seen in the movie: *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957). Marlene Dietrich (Kristin) works in a nightclub, in which the soldiers are entertained at the end of the war. The background of Germany was devastated by the war, and the presence of the conquest powers reminds us of *Foreign Affairs* and *One, Two, Three*<sup>21</sup>. Kristin sings to the restless soldiers the touching song "I may never come home again"<sup>22</sup>.

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of defense were afraid that an attitude of punishing Germany would not get positive reinforcement or a rehabilitation program that would serve the American interest. This situation was presented by the two American characters in the film: Peter Kowalski and Daniel McCullough, who reflected the contradictory attitudes regarding Germany (involvement vs. isolationism) in American society, in Hollywood and in the administration. Kowalski who represents Morgenthau, the Minister of Finance, does not want at first to come to Berlin, and is full of anger and aversion towards everything that is German. As far as he is concerned, all the Germans are Nazis and war criminals, including taxi drivers. His appreciation of Germans is very low; he hates them and wants to make them feel that they were defeated in war. McCullough, who represents the attitudes of the Secretary of State and the Minister of Defense, on the other hand, comes to Berlin with a will to make a fresh start with the German people. He is willing to receive them as human beings rather than as Nazi criminals. Finally, involvement wins but in a calculated way. Taken from: Otto Butz, *Germany: Dilemma for American Foreign Policy*, Princeton University, Garden City, N.Y., 1954, pp. 9-10, 19-21.

Ron Robin, *The Barbed – Wire College: Re-educating German POWs in the United States during World War II*, New Jersey, 1995, p. 19. See also, James P. Warburg, *Germany Key to Peace*, Cambridge, 1953, p. 15; Warren F. Kimball, *Swords or Ploughshares? The Morgenthau plan for Defeated Nazi Germany: 1943-1946*, Philadelphia, 1976, p. 31.

<sup>20</sup> George Seaton, the movie *The Big Lift*, Fox Twentieth Century, Hollywood, 1950.

<sup>21</sup> Billy Wilder: Director/Producer/Screenwriter: The film: *One, Two, Three*, Produced by United Artists. 110 min. B/W.USA, 1961.

<sup>22</sup> A song from the film: Billy Wilder: Director/Screenwriter: The film, *Witness for the Prosecution*, Produced by United Artists. 116 min. B/W. USA, 1957.

Kristin's image as a predator woman is strengthened after her husband is arrested for murder. She is the main witness of the prosecution, testifying as Kristin Helm (her name from her previous marriage). This sudden discovery of previous and still valid marriage, in pre-war Germany, makes us connect this convicting piece of information with Kristin's past and accept Leonard as the victim and Kristin as the predator. In Sir Wilfred's eyes', Kristin is the classic deceitful, destroying female. He despises her when he calls her Frau Helm, (*Freulein*) throughout the movie.

She is presented as an arrogant, cynical woman, empty of any human emotion. Sir Wilfred (Charles Laughton) gets the impression that she is a mean, cold and destructive woman. He uses a unique expression about the relation between Leonard Wall (Tyrone Power) and Kristin: "He is tied to her like a drowning person who is hanging on a razor". Kristin serves as the image of a chronic deceitful liar. Masks presenting a positive image of Germany should not tempt us. We should examine her testimony according to her past and value, and at the same time consider the benefit of supporting her reconstruction.

*Freulein* (1958) presents the position of the supporters of involvement in American foreign policy, as it was shaped at the end of the fifties in relation to Germany and the Cold War, a policy which expressed a wide consensus. Involvement in global affairs, as a main feature of American foreign policy, could clearly be seen after WWII and the Marshall Plan, especially in the first Berlin Crisis (1948-9) and the second Berlin Crisis (1958-61), at the end of which the USSR started building the Berlin Wall, the significant symbol of the Cold War. After these events, American foreign policy changed drastically, and started an active policy against the Communist Block.

An American pilot, McClain, was shot down over Germany. He ran away from the POW's camp and found shelter in the house of a German professor, who had a beautiful daughter, Erika. She and her father saved McClain from the Nazi jailers out of decency and not out of ideological reasons. This is a kind of justification for the renewal of relations between America and Germany: ideology is irrelevant to the Germans' behavior. Here the director presents the Germans as thinking that ideology is irrelevant to their behavior, since they aspire to abandon their past behavior, which ended up with destruction and a disaster, and return to the family of nations. The director put this idea in the mouth of the characters in order to show that the Germans do not think that the Nazi ideology is still relevant and that it serves their existential interest at that time. There is no doubt that this film serves the supporters of involvement, who are in favor of broader American involvement in the world, especially in Germany, as the front line of the Cold War. Therefore, the film falls in line with the American policy towards Germany, which aspired to distinguish between Nazis and Germans, rather than a collective responsibility for the past. The blame refers to the leadership. It was done in order to rehabilitate the German people, as was indicated in the introduction. For example, Erika has a fiancé, an SS soldier, but she hides McClain from him (an attempt to change the attitude towards the Germans).

Later on, the professor is killed in an air raid by the Allies. Erika moves with her uncle to Berlin, and sees the rapes and plunders the Russians do in Berlin. Her uncle is killed and she is almost raped by a drunken Russian soldier. Germany become the victim. Erika runs away to West Berlin, and McClain, who returns to Germany as an officer in the conquering forces tries to allocate Erika and her father and thank them for saving him. He finds her in a nightclub and they plan to settle in the US, but there are difficulties as the Nazi fiancé is still around, and Erika, who was registered as a prostitute, cannot get a visa to the US. The Nazi fiancé represents the Nazi past.

The movie *Freulein* is free of political or ideological issues, which were an outstanding characteristic in *Foreign Affairs* and *Big Lift*. McClain's character expresses paternalistic America. The fear of being contaminated by a moral illness is gone. There is only one fear in *Freulein*, the fear of a woman who is afraid of men, but even this fear becomes finally the inevitable path to cultural marriage. While *Foreign Affairs* and *Big Lift* try to formulate a possible and tolerable attitude towards American involvement in the post-war world, *Freulein* creates a set of codes for the alliance between the two countries. The message is 'look, there are Germans who helped us during the war', and this message is expressed in other American movies about Germany at that time.

### Summary

*Foreign Affairs*, *Big Lift*, *The Devil Makes Three*, *Witness for the Prosecution* and *Freulein* dealt with the issue of American foreign policy, focusing on the ideological-political aspect. They did it by describing life in occupied Germany, making an allegory of the relations between American soldiers and German girls, a romantic melodrama or a comedy versus a political drama. The most outstanding element is showing Germany as the treacherous woman. Germany is not significantly negative, nor is it positive. Denazification is not comprehensive, but there are positive German figures, mainly in *Freulein*, alongside negative Nazi figures.

The foreign policy is presented differently: *Foreign Affairs* clarifies the position of the isolationists, *Big Lift* tends more towards careful involvement, but remains stuck between the two approaches and does not provide a good reason for the need of involvement. The Soviets in the movie have a marginal presence, like in other movies (*Express Berlin*, *Foreign Affairs*, *One*, *Two*, *Three*), without using demonization or saying that ensuring democracy is a sufficient reason for an American involvement in world politics.

From nowadays' perspective, the movie is maybe too optimistic, but certainly no more naïve than later movies, which dealt ideologically with the Cold War. This movie does not fall in line with the McCarthy period and the witch-hunt of the fifties<sup>23</sup>. *Freulein* shows the position of supporters of involvement, expressing

<sup>23</sup> It refers to the time of McCarthyism, named after Senator McCarthy (1950-1956), during which thousands of American citizens were accused of being members of the communist party of the US, or sympathizing with it, and therefore were the target of intensive investigations operated by governmental authorities or civil agencies and committees. The most outstanding of them were:

HUAC – House UN – American Activities Committee, which was an investigation committee of the House of Representatives, and was a major component of McCarthyism in the US. This committee investigated

the perfect involvement of the Cold War. The films of post-WWII, especially between the years 1945-48 until the first crisis in the Cold War, the first Berlin Crisis, reflected the unclear and unambiguous American foreign policy. These films reflected the debate among decision makers concerning Germany (as I have indicated extensively in footnote 19 above). The debate was about the issue: what was the right policy in the existing circumstances, the one that would serve the American policy. Hence, the studio managers and film producers reflected in their films this changing and unclear policy. The film *Foreign Affairs* presented the position of the supporters of isolationism and their fears of over involvement in world, mostly European affairs. The film *Big Lift* was stuck between the two approaches and presented characters, who reflect the debate between the supporters of isolationism and those who were in favor of involvement, as I have explained in footnote 19 above, about Morgenthau on the one hand and the Secretary of State and the Minister of Defense on the other. The film *Freulein* is clearly in favor of involvement and it presents the economic opportunities that this involvement would provide for the US at the time of the Cold War. The film calls for involvement in world affairs, especially in Germany, and warns against returning to the isolationism policy which characterized American foreign policy for a long time. It claims that returning to isolationism would endanger the US and the values, for which it had joined WWII, and would bring about a situation in which the USSR would gain control over Europe, and then threaten American global interests. The end conclusion was that the USSR would become the evil power that threatens the Western-American way of life. This was clearly reflected in their negative representation, and aimed at rehabilitating the German representation and enabling American involvement in Europe, as a counterbalance against the Soviet-communist threat.

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what was defined as „communist activity and anti-American propaganda“. It made a black list of about 300 people of the movie industry who were suspected to be leftists.

OWI – Office of War Information. This was a governmental propaganda body, which issued instruction booklets to Hollywood studios that were updated all the time according to the changes in the American foreign policy towards Germany, in order to supervise the message of American films and explain how they should help the war effort both during WWII, and the Cold War against the USSR and communism.

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