



Atrocity Film

Fabian Schmidt, Alexander Oliver Zöller

Abstract

What if the SS as the main Nazi organisation responsible for the Holocaust produced a secret film about the persecution and murder of the European Jews during World War 2? The essay discusses the possible production of a documentary film about the genocide, made by the perpetrators. In doing so, it challenges a set of assumptions that is commonly put into action against such an endeavour. By examining the various activities of private and official photographers and cameramen in the context of the deportation and extermination of the European Jews and by drawing on contemporary sources which hint to such a – now lost – film project, the essay examines the available evidence and investigates comparable footage, arguing that the gaze of the perpetrators has long been part of our collective visual memory of the Holocaust.

Keywords

Holocaust, visual propaganda, documentary film, film archives, concentration camps, ghettos, Reichsfilmarchiv, Budd Schulberg

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keywords: Budd Schulberg; Liepāja; Holocaust; Reichsfilmarchiv; visual propaganda; documentary film; film archives; concentration camps; ghettos.

By order of 12 November 1940, Reichsführer SS [Heinrich Himmler] has prohibited the taking of photographs during executions and ordered that, if such photographs were necessary for official reasons, the entire material be archived.
(Reinhard Heydrich, April 1942)¹

It has now been definitely established that at least one secret film on concentration camp atrocities and other Nazi cruelties has been made in Germany for a select audience of top Nazi officials.
(Budd Schulberg, September 1945)²

¹ IfZ Munich archive, Fb 101/32.

² OSS War Crimes Photographic Project/Field Photo Branch: Report, September 11, 1945. Cornell University Law Library, Donovan Nuremberg Trials Collection:
<http://lawcollections.library.cornell.edu/nuremberg/catalog/nur:02024>

Introduction

The outset of this essay is a hypothetical question. What if the SS produced a secret film about the Genocide of the European Jews? Instantly, a lot of arguments come to mind that speak against this idea. Didn't the SS and all National Socialist institutions do everything possible in order to destroy all incriminating evidence rather than produce it? Wasn't filming in the camps and during executions forbidden by several decrees? Isn't it commonly accepted knowledge that no film footage exists of the extermination camps, the gas chambers and mass shootings, except for the well-known 8 mm amateur footage from Liepāja? At the same time, there are various references to the existence of such incriminating film material. In reaction to Claude Lanzmann's (1994)³ announcement that he would destroy any film footage from the gas chambers if he were to find it, Jean-Luc Godard claimed that with the right amount of money and a good researcher it should be possible to find exactly this kind of material within 20 years' time.⁴ It is not known if he ever really attempted to find it, but in any case nothing turned up. Intriguingly, the idea of secret film material from the extermination camps is a trope in popular culture. In Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Lili Marleen* (1981) the protagonist travels secretly to the Eastern front in order to secure a reel of film as evidence of the atrocities against Jews. The incriminating footage is even scrutinised for a fraction of a second but is subsequently destroyed during a failed exchange of Jewish concentration camp inmates.



³ See "Seminar With Claude Lanzmann, 11 April 1990," *Yale French Studies*, no. 79 (1991), pp. 82–99.

⁴ Bonnaud & Viviant (1998: 28): "I have no proof of what I'm suggesting, but I think that if I set to work with a good investigative journalist, I would find images of the gas chambers after twenty years. You would see the deportees enter and you would see the state in which they emerge again." (translation quoted from Saxton 2008: 53).

caption: *Lili Marleen* (1981, Rainer Werner Fassbinder).



caption: *Lili Marleen* (1981, Rainer Werner Fassbinder).

In the seminal TV series *Holocaust* (1978) Reinhard Heydrich is present during the projection of film footage of an execution (he in fact watches the so-called Wiener film, a privately shot 8 mm film from 1941, which shows an execution in Liepāja, discussed below) and then takes the extraordinary decision to start collecting this kind of material, which interestingly connects private and state filming at least within the diegesis of the series. Also in *Holocaust* (1978), Wehrmacht cameramen and a civilian photographer are present to document a mass shooting (see Ebbrecht-Hartmann 2016a: 321). In Andrzej Wajda's *Korczak* (1990) SS men are seen filming in the Warsaw Ghetto where re-enacted scenes of the Nazi camera crew are combined with the historical footage from 1942. Zbyněk Brynych's *Transport z ráje* (*Transport from Paradise*, 1963) revolves around the production of the propaganda film *Theresienstadt* (1945), two years before parts of the material were actually rediscovered, and in John Avnet's TV drama *Uprising* (2001) Dr. Fritz Hippler, the director of *Der ewige Jude* (1940), is translocated to Warsaw in 1943, a fictional turn in which he directs a Propaganda Company camera crew to film the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.⁵ In "The Pianist" (2002) Roman Polanski recreates a number of well-known shots from the Warsaw Ghetto film from 1942, such as the crowded bridge⁶ which connected the two ghettos, and combines it with a countershot of a Wehrmacht camera crew.

⁵ For a more detailed analysis of *Uprising* and *Der ewige Jude* see Ebbrecht-Hartmann (2011: 177)

⁶ See: <http://www.jhi.pl/en/blog/2015-01-24-the-bridge-over-chlodna>.



caption: *Uprising* (2001, John Avnet)

The Photographer of Mauthausen (2018) tells the true story of photographer Francisco Boix, who became famous for his concentration camp photographs. *Son of Saul* (2015) reenacts the shooting of the *Sonderkommando* photographs (secret photos taken from the crematoria inside Auschwitz-Birkenau) by inmate Alberto Errera. In the series *The Man in the High Castle* (2015-2019) the focus is on newsreels (representing factual history) which have leaked into the contrafactual parallel universe in which the series takes place. While the producers of the series mainly made use of real newsreels they also fabricated fake archival footage, which features some of the series' protagonists. Interestingly, this footage is not ordinary newsreel material, but shows atrocities of the Nazis, such as ad hoc executions of civilians and eventually scenes from a secret Nazi experiment taking place in a mine, reminiscent of the underground labor camp Mittelbau-Dora. Without further dwelling on the background of this film material the series clearly implies that these images belong to a larger body of execution and labor camp footage not meant to be shown publicly. Cédric Jimenez's biopic *HHhH* (2017),⁷ to give another recent example, features the fictitious filming of a mass execution in the presence of SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, and the murderous operations of an Einsatzgruppe being filmed by an SD cameraman, with Heydrich later watching the film in a cinema. The Hollywood production *Defiance* (2008, featuring Daniel Craig) opens up with black and white archival footage of roundups and executions in Poland and connects this with the diegetic reality through a fictional SS cameraman who films the atrocities. He is introduced with a shot fading from black and white to colour:

⁷ Released theatrically as *The Man with the Iron Heart* in the US, and as *Killing Heydrich* in Canada.



caption: Opening credits of *Defiance* (2008).

The production of film footage and photographs in the context of the Holocaust have repeatedly been the subject of documentaries, such as Yael Hersonski's *A Film Unfinished* (2010) about the Warsaw Ghetto film, *Gezicht van het verleden* (1997) by Cherry Duyns and *Aufschub* (2007) by Harun Farocki about the Westerbork film to name but a few.⁸ This dealing with fictitious and real 'secret' images from the genocide is not a phenomenon of the past 30 years of pop culture; it rather emerged already while the atrocities were still happening. As the astonishing example of *Calling Mr. Smith* (1943, Franciszka and Stefan Themerson) shows – a British experimental short film about the persecution of Polish Jewry – a combination of incriminating newsreel material and secretly taken photos of humiliated and murdered ghetto inhabitants was already part of cinemematical treatments well before the end of the Second World War.

⁸ Further examples: the documentary *Fotoamator* (1998) about the Ghetto accountant and amateur photographer Walter Genewein in Litzmannstadt, the short about Agfacolor footage and corresponding photographs of the execution of civilians in Pančevo in 1941 *Ein deutscher Soldat kann sehr wohl sehr viel machen* (1994), the short series about private filming of German soldiers *Unser Krieg* (1990), *Mit der Kamera an der Ostfront* (2010) about Propaganda Company cinematographer Götz Hirt-Reger, or the TV feature about the euthanasia propaganda films *Selling Murder* (1991).



caption: Götz Hirt-Reger as a PK-Filmberichter with his hand-held 35 mm Arriflex camera. Unusually, Hirt-Reger took along a private 16 mm camera, enabling him to be filmed himself by a fellow soldier.

Contrary to these pop cultural references and documentary films, the status quo of the historiographical approach as well as the public discourse is unmistakably consensual: no filming was allowed due to a decree by Himmler (hence no films were taken, one ought to conclude). Additionally, historians routinely refer to the perpetrator's alleged intention to destroy any kind of traces of their genocidal actions. This subject is frequently discussed in connection with a concept of total annihilation: not only did the Jews have to be eliminated physically – murdered and burnt – but also the memory of them and any trace of how they were put out of this world was to be erased, hence an enhanced genocide, a mnemocide was put into action.⁹

So why inquire about "the SS film" at all, given this consensus? For two key reasons, we might reply. The mere possibility of the existence of such a film project is intriguing. But even more intriguingly, the current historiographical position on the subject appears to be biased. The recourse to arguments about photo bans and the destruction of evidence reminds of the ultimately apologetic "resistance was futile" narrative that dominates German typically victimising remembrances. The popular narrative of "we couldn't do anything", in combination with the claim "there's no evidence left anyway", risks inspiring a type of historiography that tends toward escapism and romanticisation. The tendency to present Germans as victims of "the Nazis" often found in German TV documentaries and documentary-drama is not including an interest in filmic evidence related to the genocide (Ebbrecht-Hartmann 2011). Pointing out the manifold images of the ghettos, camps, deportations and executions already puts into question the mainstream perspective. Looking for the SS Film means challenging established certainties of collective remembrances – yet it also touches on self-evident truths within the historiographical academic discourse.

The assumed absence of images of the genocide also marks a broader fissure

⁹ See Assman (2007), critical: Rupnow (2002: 23).

between historiographical and public discourse, regularly addressed by historians researching the genocide. While information about the events reconstructed in the academic domain has become ever more detailed, Holocaust remembrances on the other side, especially in Germany, tend to narrow their focus despite repeated attempts by historians to broaden or redirect this perspective.¹⁰ The heterotopical Holocaust seems to present a paradox: while the monstrosity of the genocide and the resulting guilt is acknowledged and admitted, at the same time the notion of a ban of documentation inscribes an awareness of guilt into the narrative identities that somehow excludes them already from bare culpity and places them in a self-relation that actually wants to be part of a humanistic consensus. In contrast to this escapism, the SS Film represents the almost unbearable idea of a conscious decision to undertake mass murder – and to document it for posterity. To face the SS Film, in this perspective, would mean to face or to attribute full responsibility for the genocide and this perhaps echoes in the pop cultural references, reminding of its absence in more formal representations and contexts. Counter to the paradigm of the forbidden photographing and the crime that left no visual marks there are many photographs from executions and a growing number of films with similar subjects. Though these are widely unacknowledged, they prove that Himmler's ban on photography was either not followed closely or that there were notable exceptions. In fact, Himmler's decree was renewed at several levels of the Nazi ministerial bureaucracy, suggesting it was widely ignored.

As such, the search for the Atrocity Film is bound up with contemporary discourses about the Holocaust. While, after the war, the Allies were looking for incriminating film evidence for the Nuremberg trials, today's historiographical analysis does not have to prove the genocide anymore. From today's perspective it is highly questionable whether a project like the Atrocity Film would have resulted in a documentary 'proving' the genocide at all. What is actually haunting about the notion of a film about the genocide is the patent motivation of its makers. Nonetheless, the use of the surviving footage connected to the genocide in public remembrances is still informed by Lieutenant Budd Schulberg's appropriation of the footage mainly as incriminating evidence in preparation of the Nuremberg trials during his investigations for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Schulberg's search for the Atrocity Film and the historiographical scrutiny of the perpetrators' gaze¹¹ mark the crossing point of two contemporary and somewhat contradictory discourses that we will want to interrogate.

The search for a secret SS film appears to ask for two things: on the one hand it is about finding new evidence and on the other hand it is about heuristically mapping a theory about the existence of such a film project that enables us to search already known documents and archives for its traces – even if the question of palpable evidence for a direct connection to a secret film project cannot be answered for the time being. An entire set of assumptions needs to be challenged: that filming was forbidden; that all official filming has been accounted for; that we know what existed in the film bunkers and vaults at the end of the war; that all relevant film collections had been destroyed by 1945; that the Germans tacitly admitted a sense of guilt by avoiding to leave any traces (they were well aware of the criminal implications of their genocidal policies – see the explicit suspension

¹⁰ See Rupnow (2012: 2016) about the problematic postwar representation of the Holocaust in Germany.

¹¹ For a more detailed analysis of the perpetrator's gaze, see Scharnberg (2018), Arani (2010) and Koppermann (2019).

of legal prosecution during the invasion of the Soviet Union)¹²; that the fear of foreign propaganda or postwar prosecution of crimes was stronger than the attachment to National Socialist ideology; that we know exactly what the Allied forces found in the archives after the liberation, and that these films are properly accounted for today.

Two Access Points to a Different Perspective

There are two documents which call into question the dominant discourse of the absence of systematic filming and seem to lend credence to the existence of an as-yet undiscovered film about the murder of the European Jews. One is a decree issued by Reinhard Heydrich in April 1942 and the other is a report by U.S. Lt. Seymour Wilson [Budd] Schulberg from September 1945. Schulberg claimed to have found believable traces and testimonies of an Atrocity Film, a secret SS film project documenting the Holocaust. Reinhard Heydrich in 1942 specified Himmler's ban of photography during executions, originally issued in November 1941¹³ and emphasised an aspect of Himmler's initial decree that so far has not been acknowledged by historians: the order that all films and photos of executions were to be sent to and centrally collected at the RSHA (Reichssicherheitshauptamt) in Berlin.

The Schulberg Report

During World War II, U.S. Navy Lt. Budd Schulberg was assigned to the Field Photographic Branch of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the direct precursor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), working with John Ford's documentary film unit. In 1945, Ford gave Schulberg and his fellow officer Ray Kellogg the order to locate incriminating motion picture film evidence that could be used against the Nazi perpetrators at the Nuremberg trials. While Kellogg was handling logistics, Schulberg supervised the editing of the compilation film *The Nazi Plan* (1945) which consisted of footage of Nazi origin. During the editing, Schulberg claims to even have arrested Leni Riefenstahl as a witness, and to have forced her to identify Nazi officers.¹⁴ Schulberg's mission to gather

¹² Several decrees basically suspended the legal prosecution of crimes against civilians during Operation Barbarossa (the invasion of the USSR). For an overview with a focus on the situation concerning the German Navy see Borgert (1999: 53).

¹³ See epigraph of the introduction.

¹⁴ Intriguingly, Nina Gladitz (2020) connects Riefenstahl with dubious film activities in concentration camps and ghettos. On the basis of recently released files from the Archives diplomatiques, the French investigating authorities suspected that Riefenstahl shot one or more films in 1944, among other places in one of the extermination camps. She allegedly burned those film reels in front of her house during the final days of the war. Riefenstahl in 1939 was also a witness to an execution of Jewish civilians in the Polish town of Końskie. See the photos and "Event History" note in the USHMM's online database, photographs number 50414, 50415, 50418, and 50421, all taken shortly before the executions, e.g.

<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1039030>. Contrary to Riefenstahl's assertions until the end of her life, she was anything but idle during the war. One of the few surviving documents of her activities is a 1944 contract with the composer Norbert Schultze for a propaganda film about submarine bunkers, *Giganten aus Beton und Stahl* (Giants made from Concrete and Steel) which names a "Riefenstahl-Film Abt. Organisation Todt" as a contractor, clear evidence for her ongoing entanglement with Nazi organisations (Bundesarchiv, BDC files Norbert Schultze).

incriminating film material resulted in the OSS's War Crimes Project amassing a considerable body of newsreels, documentary and propaganda films as well as photographs and other records, many of which had been seized from captured Nazi sources. In September 1945 Schulberg filed a report for his OSS superiors in which he gave a detailed account of any such efforts undertaken thus far. In section III. he lists what he calls "films of German atrocities" or simply: "Atrocity Film". Under subsection D "German sources" he states that

[...] it has now been definitely established that at least one secret film on concentration camp atrocities and other Nazi cruelties has been made in Germany for a select audience of top Nazi officials.

In the following pages Schulberg explicitly names several sources who claim to have either seen the film or at least have knowledge about participants, content and possible whereabouts of the physical film elements. Schulberg further reports that his efforts to find the film had been unsuccessful thus far, as three of the film storage sites of the former Reichsfilmarchiv, in Rüdersdorf, at the Olympic stadium in Berlin, and in a salt mine at Grasleben were burnt down or otherwise destroyed shortly before his arrival, while other such film vaults were still waiting to be examined.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

HEADQUARTERS 18TH ARMY GROUP
Office of the A.C. of S, G-2
CI Interrogation Center
APO 655

Interrogation No. 0-750
Date: Initials: 14/

13 April 1945

REPORT OF INTERROGATION

NAME : NEUMANN CHRISTIAN NAME : Albert

DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH : 12 May 1922, BRAUNSCHWEIG, Germany

NATIONALITY CLAIMED : German (Austrian origin)

OCCUPATION : Assistant film director

DATE OF ARRIVAL CI INT CEN : 7 April 1945

362
5/9/45
Analyzed
L.S. 2

| | |
|----------|------------|
| HEIGHT | : 5' 9" |
| WEIGHT | : 130 lbs |
| BUILD | : Slender |
| FACE | : Narrow |
| HAIR | : Black |
| RELIGION | : Lutheran |

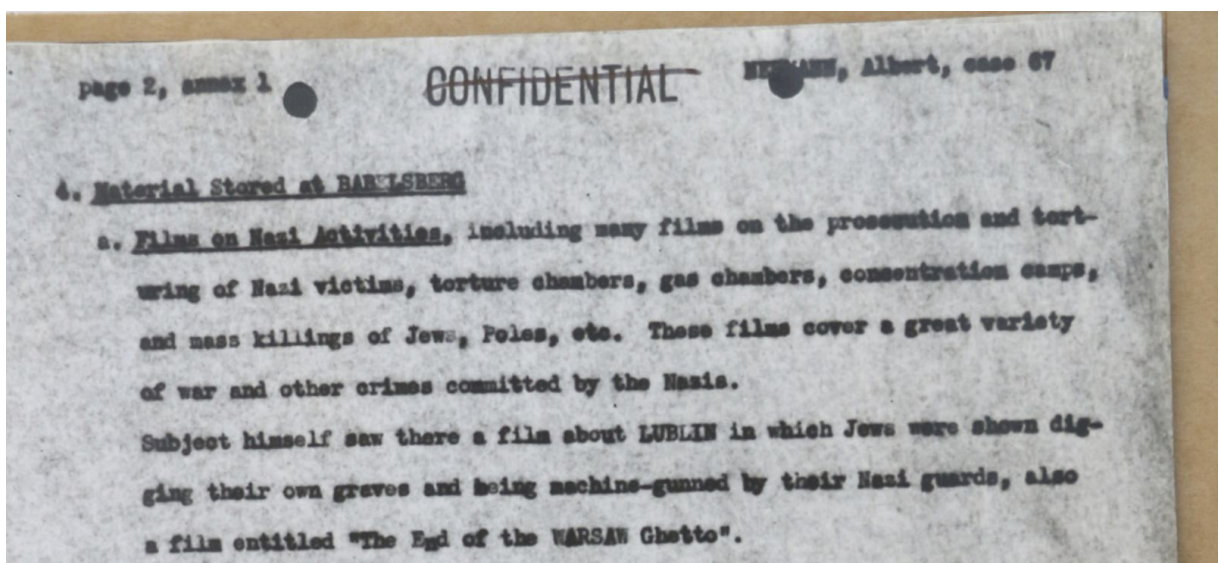


caption: The CIC's interrogation report for Albert Neumann, forwarded to the Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality at Nuremberg. NARA, RG 238, Entry 160, Box 040.

Schulberg also refers to a report by an informant named Albert Neumann, who in April 1945 had been interrogated by the American Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC). Neumann, who as an assistant worker had prepared descriptions for captured French films at Reichsfilmarchiv, was forced out of the archive in 1942 as 'half-Jewish'; he survived the

war with the support of a number of film professionals, including German film director Helmut Käutner. Neumann appears to have made it his mission to hand over information on the Reich Film Archive to the Allies, and in March 1945 passed through the frontlines to contact American forces.

Neumann proved a valuable informant on the Reich Film Archive for US military intelligence. His interrogation resulted in the Nazi film archive being elevated to a Priority 1 target in the SHAEF intelligence target reports, with U.S. forces being ordered to secure its vaults and storage sites, including the main compound outside Babelsberg, by all means possible.¹⁵ The CIC also forwarded a copy of Neumann's interrogation report to the Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality at Nuremberg. Neumann stated that he had actually seen footage "showing SS massacre of Jews in Warsaw, mass murder of Russians and Poles, gas chamber tortures and other crimes". In the corresponding file of his first interrogation, Albert Neumann claims more precisely to have watched a film "about LUBLIN in which Jews were shown digging their own graves and being machine-gunned by their Nazi guards".¹⁶ It should be noted that Neumann's descriptions are comparably detailed and hint to an unusual level of knowledge about the genocide. His account is fairly descriptive, and the number of collaborators listed by Schulberg is considerable. Schulberg attributed all this information to credible sources, leading him to believe in the existence of such an atrocity film, and that further OSS efforts to locate the film were warranted.



caption: As above. Neumann claimed to have seen "a film about LUBLIN in which Jews were shown digging their own graves and being machine-gunned by their Nazi guards [...]."

¹⁵ NARA, RG 407 (Records of the Adjutant General's Office), Entry 427, Box 2416, Folder 109-2.18 (9th Army Intelligence Target Reports). See especially Ninth US Army Intelligence Target Report No. 7 (20 April 1945), re: "Reich's-Film-Archiv", Priority 1: "[...] comprising possibly the most complete document library of the Third Reich; films on Nazi activities, including many which document Nazi war crimes and atrocities [...]. It is urgently requested that every possible effort be made to locate the target, that a guard be posted adequate for its protection, and that G-2, 12th Army Group be immediately notified of its seizure".

¹⁶ Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, NARA RG 238, Entry NM-70 160, Box 040, Neumann interrogation report, p. 2 annex 1.

The Schulberg report nevertheless is situated in a realm between factual report and fanciful imagination. A Hollywood scriptwriter by trade, Budd Schulberg was hardly given over to strictly objective reporting, and it is difficult to ignore the well-crafted dramaturgy of his assertions. Indeed in 1946 Schulberg went on to publish a sensationalised account of his hunt for the "Atrocity Film" in *The Screen Writer*, a trade journal of the Screen Writers Guild. It should also be taken into account that the Schulberg report was a means to justify and secure funding for his ongoing mission in Germany. As such, Schulberg's assertions are hardly to be taken at face value. They rather represent one of the initial sources for the myth of the existence of film documents about the Holocaust that started to proliferate already during the war and which are still ubiquitous until today.

The Film Crew

After the war, all filming in the context of the genocide was considered collaboration in most of the former occupied countries, hence only few people admitted to have assisted on such projects. Some were prosecuted. Karel Pečený, head of the Newsreel company Aktualita for example, was tried and convicted in 1947 for taking part in the production of *Theresienstadt* (1945)¹⁷ (Strusková 2016) while the illustrator Jo Spier after his return to the Netherlands in 1945 was accused of having "collaborated" in the same production.¹⁸ Perhaps as a result, the director's post of both the notorious propaganda film *Theresienstadt* and the Westerbork film¹⁹ were attributed to individuals who perished in the death camps. In both cases historians have recently questioned these attributions. While there is scanty evidence in favor but a lot against Rudolph Breslauer's alleged role directing the Westerbork film (Schmidt 2020), the historical record also indicates that Kurt Gerron acted as a production manager rather than director of the film *Theresienstadt*.²⁰ In case of the Atrocity Film, the person listed as director, Hans Schönmetzler, vanished in 1945 in Berlin and was considered dead by the time Schulberg's report was written. But all other individuals that appear in connection with the Atrocity Film, and here the report gains credibility, were still alive and would live on until recent years. Their full biographies remain a desideratum of historiographical research for now, but the few known details are intriguing. Schulberg names the film editor Conrad von Molo (1906-1997) who worked for Fritz Lang and followed him into emigration to France after the ban of *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (1933) in Germany. After a short period of exile in London, von Molo returned in 1939 to Germany and found work at UFA, where he edited two infamous propaganda films, *Stukas* (1941) and the anti-Soviet *G.P.U.* (1942). Due to Schulberg's informant Walter Rode, who claims to have been friends with him, von Molo was offered to work on a secret SS Film in 1942. In 1943 Hans Schönmetzler had produced the film *Der kleine Grenzverkehr* which von Molo had edited. Like von Molo, Schönmetzler was involved in propaganda films. He worked as a line producer for the anti-Semitic film ...und

¹⁷ The full title was possibly: *Theresienstadt. Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet* as visible in a fragment found in 1987, but in the earliest mentions by Benjamin Murelstein it is always referred to simply as *Theresienstadt*.

¹⁸ As a matter of fact these contributions by Jews can hardly be called collaboration, as they occurred under coercion.

¹⁹ The Westerbork film is an unfinished project commissioned by camp commander Gemmeker in the spring of 1944 in the transit camp of Westerbork in the Netherlands. It was granted UNESCO world document heritage status in 2017.

²⁰ Margry (1996: 7) suggests to reconsider to which extent Gerron acted as director.

reitet für Deutschland (1941) and for the "Durchhaltefilm" (a propaganda film to bolster the will of the German population to resist the Allied advance) *Junge Adler* (1944). It seems worth mentioning that von Molo and Schönmetzler were named by different sources. Guido Mensing, Major Typke and Martin Mehls, who are referred to as camera operators in the report are known to have been active as members of the German Propagandakompanien (Propaganda Companies). Typke was Leader of the "Filmtrupp" of Heeresgruppe B. Weidemann and Gunther Kaufmann, allegedly responsible for the production of the film, have not yet been identified.

Other Individuals Implicated in the Search for the Atrocity Film

Informants:

- Walter Rode (newsreel editor at UFA), died 1946
- Albert Neumann (former employee of Reichsfilmarchiv and important informant for the Americans)
- Dr. Müller (Austrian film producer, not identified yet)
- Horst Grund (1915-2001), Luftwaffe officer, PK-Filmberichter and cameraman with special assignments

Schulberg's antagonists:

- Major Georgii Avenarius, film professor in Moscow, sent to Germany to evaluate the collections of Reichsfilmarchiv. Details about his mission to Germany remain sealed in the archives of the Russian intelligence service FSB.
- Major Viergang (Фирганг), a Soviet film specialist sent to Germany together with Avenarius, to evaluate and ship to Moscow films from Reichsfilmarchiv as well as from the film studios in Berlin and Babelsberg.
- Richard Quaas, head of Reichsfilmarchiv between 1938 and 1945; he was responsible for the destruction of secret films at the end of the war.

Unquestionably, Schulberg's search for evidence against the defendants in Nuremberg shaped his perspective. Today, the question of the existence of such a film is bound to have more complex implications. At the very least, the persons and institutions named in his report provide a broad basis for further investigations about the Atrocity Film.

The Heydrich Decree

As outlined by Bernd Boll, and contrary to widespread assumptions, no general ban on private filming and photographing for army personnel existed in Nazi Germany. The only exception was the German Navy where, beginning with the outbreak of the war, filming and photographing required a permit, which was easy enough to obtain. In all other areas bans were limited, either temporally or spatially (Boll undated: 2). In general, the photographing of strategically sensitive objects such as airports, military installations or certain civil engineering structures was forbidden. The often public executions and the life in the camps somehow were borderline cases that attracted film amateurs. Hence, there were several attempts to limit the photographing and filming in these areas. Already in August 1940 SS-Obergruppenführer Friedrich-Wilhelm Krüger decreed a ban on

photography during executions in Krakow. Its wording: "The execution shall be carried out in a way that the participation of unauthorised persons is impossible. Any participation and the photographing are prohibited in principle."²¹ Due to the ongoing practice of taking photos by military personnel, including ordinary soldiers of the Wehrmacht who participated in executions as spectators and onlookers, if not perpetrators, such photo bans were issued in various contexts, including a decree by Himmler from November 1941. This particular decree, which has not survived, was renewed and altered by Reinhard Heydrich in March 1942. But instead of only reaffirming the ban, Heydrich specified that all photos and films that had so far been taken were to be sent as top secret material (Geheime Reichssache) to the RSHA in Berlin. Striking about this order is the fact that Heydrich explicitly demanded to contextualise the footage "in every case" by specifying date and place and that he refers to the earlier decree by Himmler (from November 12, 1941) as mandating the "archival collection" of all existing footage ("archivmäßig zu sammeln") at Referat IV A 1 of the RSHA. The authors are inclined to rule out that Heydrich was merely trying to identify the photographers (for disciplinary action or punishment) by requesting that date and place be recorded: he specifies that mainly photos "taken for official reasons" were meant to be subjected to systematic archiving.²² Moreover, it seems unlikely that the RSHA would have been tasked with collecting those films and photos for the sole purpose of destroying them. This could have been achieved much more easily by ordering such material to be destroyed by commanding officers in situ. Andrej Angrick in his seminal study about the systematic elimination of mass graves by unearthing and cremating the bodies, "Aktion 1005" (2019), points to another possible reason, when he speculates that the altered decree could be related to the initial attempts to locate mass graves by asking for exact locations of executions recorded on film and photographs. Paul Blobel's Aktion 1005 encountered massive obstacles in this regard since there were no reliable documents as to where many mass executions had taken place only a few years prior. While this cannot be ruled out as an additional motivation, the decision to archive films and photographs of the executions stands in direct conflict with the general notion of Himmler's photo ban as means to prevent the documentation of these acts.

²¹ "Die Exekution hat so zu erfolgen, dass die Teilnahme von Unbefugten unmöglich ist. Jede Teilnahme und das Fotografieren sind grundsätzlich verboten."

²² "[...] sofern derartige Aufnahmen aus dienstlichen Gründen erforderlich sind, das gesamte Aufnahmematerial archivmäßig zu sammeln ist." ("[...] if such recordings are required for official reasons, all recordings must be collected in an archive").

Kommando der Schutzpolizei

S. Ial 5100/17.6.

Berlin, den 25. Juni 1942

1.) Abschrift.

Der Chef der Sicherheitspolizei
und des SD

Berlin, den 16. April 1942

IV A 1 Nr. 1042^{II}/41 - 151 -.

An

die höheren ~~W~~- und Polizeiführer

VP.

Betreff: Photographieren von Exekutionen.

Der Reichsführer-~~W~~ hat durch Befehl vom 12.11.1941 - Tgb. Nr. I 1481/41 Abs. - das Photographieren von Exekutionen verboten und angeordnet, daß, sofern derartige Aufnahmen aus dienstlichen Gründen erforderlich sind, das gesamte Aufnahmema-
terial archivmäßig zu sammeln ist.

Hierzu wird ergänzend angeordnet:

Für dienstliche Zwecke dürfen Aufnahmen von Exekutionen im allgemeinen nur auf Weisung des Führers des Einsatz- oder Sonderkommandos bzw. des Kompaniechefs der Waffen-~~W~~ und des Zugführers der Kriegsberichterabteilung hergestellt werden. Falls in Ausnahmefällen derartige Aufnahmen dringend erforderlich sind und die Einholung der Genehmigung des Führers des Einsatz- oder Sonderkommandos bzw. des Kompaniechefs der Waffen-~~W~~ und des Zugführers der Kriegsberichter-Abteilung nicht möglich ist, sind diese nachträglich davon zu unterrichten.

Der Führer des Einsatz- oder Sonderkommandos bzw. der Kompaniechef der Waffen-~~W~~ und der Zugführer der Kriegsberichter-Abteilung tragen die Verantwortung dafür, daß Platten, Filme und Abzüge nicht in der Hand des einzelnen Angehörigen der Einsatzdienststelle verbleiben.

Soweit im dienstlichen Interesse photographische Aufnahmen gemacht werden, hat der Führer des Einsatz- oder Sonderkommandos bzw. der Kompaniechef der Waffen-~~W~~ und der Zugführer der Kriegsberichter-Abteilung das belichtete Aufnahmematerial in unentwickeltem Zustand unverzüglich dem Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Referat IV A 1) als "Geheime Reichssache" zu übersenden.

Soweit sich noch Aufnahmen oder belichtete Filme und Platten von Exekutionen bei den Dienststellen oder bei einzelnen Angehörigen der Dienststellen befinden, sind diese umgehend dem Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Referat IV A 1) zu übersenden. Dem-
gleichen ist festzustellen, wieweit eventuell Aufnahmen, Filme und Platten von Exekutionen bereits von Angehörigen der Einsatzdienststellen in die Heimat verbracht worden sind. Es ist Sorge zu tragen, daß auch dieses Aufnahmematerial unverzüglich dem Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Referat IV A 1) zugeleitet wird. In jedem Falle sind Zeit und Ort der gemachten Aufnahmen anzugeben. Gleichzeitig ist eine dienstliche Versicherung des betreffenden Angehörigen der Dienststelle beizufügen, daß er weitere Aufnahmen nicht gemacht hat und alle Platten, Filme und Abzüge abgeliefert sind.

Dieser Erlaß ist allen Angehörigen der polizeilichen Einsatzdienststellen sowie den Angehörigen der Waffen-~~W~~ und deren Kriegsberichter-Abteilungen bekanntzugeben.

gez. H e y d r i c h .

Beglaubigt:
(L.S.) gez. Frahm.

caption: Heydrich's decree of April 16, 1942, relayed by the Kommando der Schutzpolizei to its own distribution list on June 25, 1942. IfZ Munich archive, Fb 101/32.

Himmler's photo ban from 1941 is usually referred to not in the form of the original decree which has not survived, but in an order by Himmler himself from 1944, where he reaffirms the ban. When Heydrich paraphrases the photo ban in 1942, however, he talks about the request of systematic and archival ("archivmäßigem") film collecting. We might conclude that Himmler's initial ban has been mistakenly taken for a simple ban on photography, when it in fact represented the beginning of collecting film footage and photographs of atrocities. In this perspective Heydrich mainly gave more specific orders about how to label the films and explicitly included the order in the policies of handling the Jewish populations in the occupied and Nazi-affiliated territories.

Indeed, as detailed above, the amendment about stating place and date does not

sound as if the footage was collected predominantly in order to be destroyed. Moreover, the context of Aktion 1005 does not seem to explain the decree sufficiently. Obviously, Heydrich reacted to the fact that Himmler's decree had not been strictly adhered to, since otherwise there would not have been much footage to collect. Unfortunately, there is no evidence of how much footage was sent in or where and how Referat IV A 1 archived such films and photos. Heydrich's decree nonetheless hints to a policy within the RSHA aimed at collecting evidence rather than destroying it. Although these collections of films and photos of executions most likely do not constitute the main effort in producing material for the Atrocity Film that Budd Schulberg was looking for, the Heydrich decree seems to be at least one important precondition for the possibility of such an endeavour.

Filming the Genocide

Now you have been informed and you have to keep silent.
Maybe a long time hereafter, one may think about
whether the German people are to be told more about it.
(Heinrich Himmler, October 6, 1943)²³

The prevailing assumption that no film footage from the concentration camps survived rests on two contradictory claims: that no such footage is believed to ever have been shot; and that any such footage must have been destroyed by the Germans before the Allied troops could find it. While the destruction of incriminating documents – including films and photographs – did occur, it is worth considering the underlying assumptions about the material for such a film in more detail. It is often assumed that filming was uncommon in the 1940s and that atrocities against Jews were not filmed due to existing laws and regulations. Moreover, it is taken as read that perpetrators did not film each other while committing these atrocities; that there is no evidence for state-sponsored efforts to document atrocities on film; that those responsible for carrying out these atrocities had no intention of documenting the genocide; and that all existent footage has been scrutinised in the context of holocaust remembrance and thereby rendered 'iconic'. In the following section we will turn to the first three questions, which deal with the uncertainty whether the reality of the genocidal proceedings did allow or make it likely that filming was undertaken at all.

The issue of filming during executions and other manifestations of the genocide touches on broader questions about the existence and awareness of what we might term "mediated reality" in National Socialist society. In general, historical narratives point to a significantly less overt media presence before 1945. The absence of a free press and the use of propaganda in weekly newsreel screenings are invoked to bolster the claim that the general public was ignorant, and mainly serve as an explanation for theories of susceptibility. Beyond the fact that film and photographic cameras had existed for private use since the 1920s, documentaries about the Third Reich leave out the existence of Nazi-era television. In fact, the Germans were the first nation worldwide to launch a public

²³ Smith, Bradley F. and Agnes F. Peterson (1974: 170f); English translation quoted from Rupnow (2012: 63). Original quote: "Sie wissen nun Bescheid, und Sie behalten es für sich. Man wird vielleicht in ganz später Zeit sich einmal überlegen können, ob man dem deutschen Volke etwas mehr darüber sagt." Himmler's speech was delivered in Posen to the assembled Reichs- and Gauleiter (regional party leaders) of the NSDAP.

TV programme in 1935. This included live-transmission of the Olympic Games in 1936 and a daily TV programme published in German newspapers. Though TVs were very rare in private homes, Berliners gathered regularly in one of the 15 public Fernsehstuben (small television halls) in bars or restaurants. While TV as an experience was not part of an average German daily routine, its existence in terms of the potential of live-transmission for example was very real and visible for all Germans. The existence of proto-televisual media in Nazi Germany does not directly bear on the question of the Atrocity Film but serves to exemplify vividly how the historicisation of World War II tends to privilege the representation of daily life more in terms of difference than similarity to the postwar medial landscape, thereby leaving continuities out of the historical account.

Private Filming

The widespread popularity of camera equipment on the mass market related both to motion picture film and photography in the 1940s has been examined in the past two decades by several publications, exhibitions and documentaries. These include Frances Guerin's "Through Amateur Eyes" (2012), "Waffe und Souvenir" (Bernd Boll), the exhibitions "Fremde im Visier" (Germany, 2009) and "Fotofeldpost" (Berlin, 2000), as well as recent television productions such as the series *Wir im Krieg* (ZDF 2020). In the late 1990s, a scandal emerged from the exhibition "Vernichtungskrieg. Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944", which focused on privately-taken photos of executions. Despite the misidentification of some images in the first version of the exhibition, the evidence showed the direct involvement of the German Wehrmacht in acts of genocide – a fact repressed by large swaths of German society until then. This scandal is also a vivid example of the factor 'selectivity' within remembrances (Sebald and Weyand 2011). Being already part of the family remembrances which passed on private photo albums and photo collections of veterans, those images fell to a fierce debate to integrate them into the dominant memory and remembrance culture. While those private photos implicated the Wehrmacht in atrocities, private filming and photography bear only an indirect connection to the possible existence of an SS or Atrocity Film. The RSHA collection of films and photographs that Heydrich or perhaps even Himmler started might have broadened the material basis of such a film, but it does not prove its existence. However, the omnipresence of film and photo cameras at the sites of murder and persecution suggests filming (by a crew of Propaganda Company personnel for example) would rarely have met with resistance from the perpetrators. In fact, cameras were so common that official filming would have hardly been noticed as something special.

More generally, as Bernd Boll notes, amateur photographs were regularly used for official purposes in the military context. In 1941 the OKH (Army High Command) started a photo archive and explicitly requested amateur contributions. There were several photo competitions commissioned by the Wehrmacht and SS and even efforts for a "SS Museum" that explicitly was supposed to be based partially on amateur photographs (Boll undated: 10). Natascha Drubek (2016a) names an intriguing example of an interweaving of official and private filming that could even be related to these efforts. During the production of the first Theresienstadt film in 1942, a half-private 16 mm 'making of' was also shot, which shows Olaf Sigismund and other SD officers during the filming. The SS in particular encouraged amateur photographers to contribute private films and photos on several

occasions and for various purposes.²⁴ Since the Waffen-SS was, compared to units of the Wehrmacht, very young, they had a distinct interest in building a tradition based on photographs taken by their own soldiers. Of course this was part of a nationwide effort to integrate private photography into a larger framework of propagandistic infiltration (see Bopp 2009: 47).

Perpetrators are Filming (Other Perpetrators)

Despite the oft cited decree by Himmler, SS and Wehrmacht personnel continued filming and photographing executions. Not only were the actual executions filmed, German Wehrmacht and SS personnel are regularly visible in these materials. Filming appears to have been normal, to the point where there are images from executions with several bystanders taking photos or even filming at the same time.



caption: Detail from the 8 mm pogrom footage from Lviv²⁵, included in *Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today* (1948, Stuart Schulberg). The film was used as exhibit of Nazi atrocities in the Nuremberg IMT (German War Crimes Trials, exhibit PS-3052) and screened in the courtroom on December 13, 1945.

²⁴ Boll names two larger projects, one by SS-Gruppenführer Hermann Fegelein and another one by SS-Brigadeführer Felix Steiner. Like many units of the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS from about the regimental level upwards, Fegelein's 1.SS-Totenkopf-Reiterstandarte maintained its own archive. Boll (undated: 7).

²⁵ Today, the city of Lviv is part of Ukraine. During its troubled history the city was known under various names, including the German Lemberg and Polish Lwow.



caption: A Wehrmacht soldier (center) taking a photo of Jews being executed. Unknown date and location, possibly Šiauliai (Lithuania). See discussion of a segment from *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* 567/30/1941 (under section Official filming: Newsreels), which also may have been filmed in Šiauliai.



caption: Reprisal execution of Serbian civilians in Pančevo, Serbia. Gottfried Kessel can be seen filming with his 16 mm camera in the black-and-white photo taken by Gerhard Gronefeld. Kessel's position and camera angle correspond with a shot in the Agfacolor footage he took..



caption: German SS officer taking a photograph of the execution.



caption: Still from *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* 567/30/1941: Jews being assaulted in Riga, Latvia, with a German photographer documenting the scene.



caption: Numerous Wehrmacht spectators with private cameras take pictures of an execution by hanging.
Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-287-0872-28A / Koll / CC-BY-SA 3.0.



caption: As above. Cropped image to emphasise photographers.

As we will show, sometimes footage of the same execution from different angles does exist. In rare cases film and photography happen to cover virtually the same moment, only from different angles. A notable example is the public execution by hanging of Wolf Kieper and Mosche Kogan in Zhitomir on August 7, 1941. Numerous photographs of this execution, carried out as a public spectacle by members of Sonderkommando 4a of Einsatzgruppe C in the presence of hundreds of Wehrmacht soldiers as well as civilians, have been in circulation for decades. An eyewitness later deposed that during the hanging, "onlooking soldiers shouted 'slowly, slowly' in order to get better pictures."²⁶ More recently, an amateur film with scenes of the hanging has surfaced.²⁷

The Ghetto as a Topos of Amateur Film

During and after the invasion of Poland in 1939, Polish Jews were rounded up and forcibly moved into ghettos. While the Jews were not allowed to leave without special permission, it was possible for non-Jews to visit the ghettos, especially for personnel of the German military and occupation authorities. As Natascha Drubek (2016b) outlines, the ghetto became part of official propaganda efforts from the very start, in the beginning often failing due to the "resistance to denigration" on side of the filmed subjects. As we will show, a similar development can be traced in the surviving amateur footage. The Warsaw Ghetto was a popular destination for uniformed tourists and the surviving motion picture and photographic material suggests that the regular visits led to a kind of established dramaturgy: the tour often starts at Pawiak prison, moves through some of the streets with shops, continues to bombed houses and eventually leads to the cemetery where corpses or even burials in mass graves are presented for the camera. Andrej Angrick describes the situation as such:

Warsaw, in whose ghetto – the largest in Europe – "officially" around 400,000 people lived, was considered a symbol of Eastern Judaism under Frank's sceptre in the filleted torso of Poland [...]. The ghetto exerted a morbid attraction on travellers from the "Aryan" side. "Not a day went by without numerous Wehrmacht units" coming to take a look at how people were dying on the streets – "it is no exaggeration to say that they were only skin and bones" [statement by Zygmunt Warman]. The highlight of the 'ghetto tour' was a visit to the Jewish cemetery, which served as a

²⁶ German original: "[...] die zuschauenden Landser brüllten 'Langsam, langsam', um besser fotografieren zu können." Quoted in Boll (1997: 70).

²⁷ See <http://www.archiv-akh.de/filme/3349>, and filmography. Kieper and Kogan were arrested by the SD at the beginning of August for being members of the local Soviet court. Several hundred male Jews from Zhitomir were brutally beaten and forced to witness the hanging; they were then led to a nearby horse cemetery and shot. See photographs in USHMM photo archives: 17538, 17539, 17541, 17544, 17546, 18451, 18454, 18458, 33399, and discussion: Klee and Dreßen (1991: 106-117). In 2017 additional private snapshots of the hanging were accessioned by the Landesarchiv Speyer, Germany. See <https://archivtag.hypotheses.org/637>, and the TV documentary *Wir im Krieg - Privatfilme aus Hitlers Reich* (2020, Jörg Müllner), which also includes the amateur film.

mass grave. Porters regularly arrived with wheelbarrows full of emaciated, naked bodies. At such moments, visitors even took forbidden photos with their cameras, which were later shown around not only at the office for amusement, but also in private circles.²⁸

Police officer Hans Richter described the Warsaw ghetto in his book *Einsatz der Polizei* from 1943 suggestively as a "destination for all those who wanted to face the war properly".²⁹

Best known among the surviving footage is the so-called "Warsaw Ghetto film" which was shot in 1942 by a Propagandakompanie unit and was intensely scrutinised in Yael Hersonski's *A Film Unfinished* (2010).³⁰ But besides this official film project there were several private film (and photography) efforts in Polish ghettos which have survived. So far, the authors were able to identify more than 20 film and photo convolutes of such ghetto visits, which justifies a more detailed examination. Perhaps the earliest one is *Der Jude im Regierungsbezirk Zichenau* by Horst Loerzer, a PK cinematographer who visited the ghetto in Plonsk, as Efrat Komisar (2016) from Yad Vashem has established, where he filmed extensively. Here we already find the dramaturgy of marketplace, life in the side streets, and visiting the cemetery which reminds us of the 'streamlined' footage from the Warsaw ghetto. Some of the residents whom Loerzer films appear assertive, they often laugh into the camera. While the gazes at the camera speak of mutual (if undeserved) respect he also attempts to film close ups of individuals in a kind of mugshot vibe, but the 'delinquents' do not live up to anti-Semitic expectations: they neither fit into any stereotype nor do they succumb to the patronising gesture. Instead many Jews mockingly pose for the camera. Loerzer edited his footage and produced a documentary short that won an amateur film award in 1941.³¹ Most likely around late 1941 (though possibly in spring 1942) a group of Luftwaffe officers visited the Warsaw ghetto with a car and a 16 mm camera. They do not take any mugshots (which seem to occur more regularly in semi-official efforts such as the film from the Bedzin ghetto) but film passers-by and ghetto life in general. Repeatedly the camera films ruins of bombed out buildings as if looking for an innocent pretext for the filming. The group visits the cemetery, where a grave-digger presents corpses for the camera. Clearly the situation here differs substantially from the aforementioned film by Loerzer: the ghetto inhabitants are interested in the visitors, but they are distanced and anxious. The filming betrays no empathy for the starving, obviously dying population. A third convolute worth mentioning are the photos by Willy Georg who visited the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1941. Georg does not visit the cemetery and he also does not start his trip at the prison but instead examines the street life in a limited area

²⁸ Angrick (2019: 866): "Warschau, in dessen Ghetto – dem größten Europas – 'offiziell' rund 400.000 Menschen lebten, galt im filetierten Rumpfpolen unter Franks Zepter als Symbol für das Ostjudentum [...]. Auf Reisende von der "arischen" Seite übte das Ghetto einen morbiden Reiz aus. "Es verging kein Tag, an dem nicht zahlreiche Wehrmachtsabteilungen" kamen, um einen Blick darauf zu werfen, wie die Menschen auf der Straße sterben – "man kann ohne Übertreibung sagen, daß sie nur aus Haut und Knochen waren" [Aussage Zygmunt Warman]. Höhepunkt der 'Ghetto-Tour' war der Besuch des jüdischen Friedhofs, der als Massengrab diente. Regelmäßig trafen Leichenträger mit Schubkarren voller ausgemergelter, nackter Körper ein. In einem solchen Moment machten die Besucher mit der Kamera sogar verbotenerweise Fotos, die später nicht nur auf der Dienststelle zum Amüsement, sondern auch im privaten Kreis herumgezeigt wurden."

²⁹ "Ziel all derer, die dem Krieg einmal richtig ins Auge sehen wollten" (Spieker 2005: 89).

³⁰ For a more detailed analysis about the Warsaw Ghetto Film, see Horstmann (2009, 2011).

³¹ See *Film für Alle*, XVI.1942, 2, p. 33. Loerzer's film won first prize in the "documentary" category of the 1941 amateur film Gauwettbewerb in East Prussia.

in the north of the ghetto. In fact, he remembers to have gotten into trouble when a guard did object to his photographing and confiscated the film he had in the camera. It's not exactly clear why this happened as there was no official ban on filming in the ghettos.³² Though the horrible circumstances enforced by the Germans already led to people dying in public, Georg manages to photograph with a degree of dignity – despite the fact that rampant starvation already had reached a level where corpses were lying in the streets. The combination of artistic photography and compassionate observation in Willy Georg's images is startling, and some of his photos intimate a haunting intensity.

³² Willy Georg's recollection is not accurate. The four rolls of film he claims to have shot on that day actually belong to two different occasions.



caption: Ghetto inmate engaging with the camera of Willy Georg. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC, Photograph Number: 07540.
<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1044178>

Very different but also typical are the 16 mm color films by Götz Hirt-Reger who filmed privately during his deployment as pioneer and later PK cinematographer on the Eastern Front. Hirt-Reger documents his own daily life and that of the people in the villages his unit travels through. He often uses a telephoto lens or films from behind bushes in order to obtain film material without interfering with the situations he is filming.

Hirt-Reger films Jewish forced laborers in Warsaw, in his pioneer camp, and also in a Jewish quarter in Krakow.³³

Among the private filming efforts in the ghettos there is one particularly elaborate example which integrates the visit of the ghetto into a 12" report of a trip through recently occupied Poland, furnished with intertitles. After some shots with sights from Warsaw the ghetto is described as follows: "450000 Jews pollute Warsaw with their indescribable dirt." The following images, which most likely were shot only weeks after the fall of the city, in fact show a street with city folks hardly distinguishable from the rest of the footage shot outside the ghetto. In this case, the anti-Semitic indoctrination of the person editing the film leads to appropriation and unvarnished anticipation of what was awaiting the Polish Jewry.

In 2019 the Polish-Canadian director Eric Bednarski presented throughout his documentary *Warsaw: A City Divided* ten minutes of black and white film shot by the amateur Polish filmmaker Alfons Ziolkowski in the ghetto in 1941. Ziolkowski was a Polish amateur film maker and businessman, regularly visiting the ghetto. It is the only known footage from the ghetto that was not recorded by the perpetrators and hence is especially suitable for comparison purposes.

While the variety described above also provides a canvas on which the perpetrators' gaze becomes tangible – after all it's not the horrible situation alone that is responsible for the humiliating representations – it should be noted that Willy Georg is a rare exception and the vast majority of footage filmed in the ghettos is similar in style to the anti-Semitic Warsaw Ghetto film from 1942 or the indifferent gaze of the Luftwaffe officers. Beyond all differences, these examples of private films and photos show how easy it was to film inside the ghettos, and that it was such a common occurrence that already a kind of ghetto-tourism and a convergence of the images – their subjects, the order in which they were covered and even in regard to how the ghetto inhabitants were portrayed and categorised – emerged. The ghettoisation as such did constitute a violation of basic rights of millions. Still, it seems questionable if the presence of uniformed personnel in these films and photographs is correctly described with "perpetrators filming perpetrators". Nonetheless, there is a connection between the uniformed figures that appear in these films and the ones visible in the clearly incriminating film material from, for example, the pogrom in Lviv: in both cases the footage basically is intended to record an exotic travel experience rather than a crime scene. These films demonstrate how easy it was to obtain information about the ongoing ghettoisation and deportation and about the horrible effects of food deprivation which is visible in all those films.

Liepāja and Lviv – Executions as Public Spectacle

Without doubt the best-known private film about the genocide is an 8 mm film by Kriegsmarine soldier Reinhard Wiener who, at least according to his own testimony, 'happened' to come by a public execution in Liepāja and felt compelled to film it. It is the only known film of a mass execution of Jews, which has ensured its sustained use in countless documentaries about the Holocaust, even when the actual event the respective

³³ Hirt-Reger also filmed executed Jews and a handful of unclear situations that well could be documenting war crimes.

production sought to illustrate did not take place anywhere near Liepāja, or Latvia, or the Baltics for that matter. While filmic representations of the actual killing rely so heavily on Wiener's film, there are at least three more films that show executions by shooting:³⁴ one from Pančevo, which we will discuss below, and two others, which are less known and which depict the execution of individual victims shot at the edge of a pit: A brief narrow-gauge segment, presumably amateur footage, spliced into Roman Karmen's *Velikaia Otechestvennaia / The Great Patriotic War* (USSR 1965) in which a single victim is killed with a shot to the head and toppled into a pit, as well as another narrow-gauge film showing the killing of civilians in the Serbian city of Sremska Mitrovica.³⁵

The prominent rank the Wiener material has assumed within the Holocaust remembrances and the "cinematic memory" (see Ebbrecht-Hartmann 2016b) which the film has accumulated calls for a more detailed analysis of the circumstances of its creation. Reinhard Wiener served in 1941 as a Sergeant in the German Navy (Feldwebel der Kriegsmarine) in Liepāja, Latvia. He was stationed there in July 1941 as a member of Naval-Flak-Company 707. In several interviews he gave since the 1960s Wiener recalled how he came across the killing site in Liepāja during a sightseeing trip with a comrade. He claims his original idea was 'to take a film of Libau in summer' and that he found the execution site only by coincidence, while strolling through a park south of Liepāja with a friend (Wiener 1981: 7). Wiener's account is not free from contradictions, as he also admits indirectly that Jews working for the Navy had told him that their relatives had vanished and that they believed they had been killed.³⁶ Further on in the interview he even admits that among Wehrmacht colleagues there had been discussions about who was executed at the beach in Liepāja in general: "I was under the impression that they were just shot because they were Jews. And that was known in the Navy. It had gotten about in the Navy that Jews were being shot, not partisans or other such people" (Wiener 1981: 13). Wiener used a Cine Kodak Eight 8 mm camera.³⁷

³⁴ There is one film that shows the public hanging of ten Jews, most likely in the winter of 1940/41 in the Brzeziny Ghetto, see filmography.

³⁵ The provenance of the brief sequence included in Karmen's film has not been established; it seems probable that it originated from an archival source inside the Soviet Union. Elements (including preservation copies) for the film from Sremska Mitrovica are located at Jugoslovenska Kinoteka in Belgrade, Serbia. The authors gratefully acknowledge details provided about this film by the Kinoteka's head of archival collections, Aleksandar Erdeljanovic.

³⁶ Clearly Wiener tries to avoid the impression that he visited the execution site voluntarily. Nonetheless, it is well possible that he gained detailed information about it only after his visit. As a matter of fact this information was available for everyone stationed in Liepāja from the moment the executions started.

³⁷ Cine Kodak Eight was the brand name for the newly introduced 8 mm standard that used 16 mm film footage which was twice exposed (first the left half, then the right half) and then after developing cut into two 8 mm strips. Cine Kodak Eight Model 20 was the most common camera (see Pančevo photographs) for amateurs and was most likely used by Wiener.



caption: Cine Kodak Eight camera filled with 16 mm film stock, which would be spliced into 8 mm film upon being developed.

Wiener's film shows how middle-aged men descend from a lorry and are forced to run to an open pit where they are executed by firing squad. Several groups of Jews are executed in this manner while Wiener moves his camera closer to the rim. Owing to the construction of his camera, he was only able to record a couple of seconds at a time before having to wind up the camera again. The filming takes place from within a large group of bystanders and there are groups of spectators in various uniforms as well as civilian attire all over the place. The circumstances of how this footage was produced and handed down have been scrutinised by Ebbrecht-Hartmann in detail (2016a). The footage from Liepāja is of special interest for the hypothesis of the Atrocity Film, as it once more stresses how ordinary even the filming of executions was. The fact that Wiener was able to film from a prominent position and was even asked by one of the SS officers in the picture if he was able to film "something good" (Kuball 1980: 121) shows how unproblematic filming was.

The execution site in Liepāja is only of marginal importance compared to other killing fields, but it seems to have been very popular. There are many photographs from executions in Liepāja, most likely from several different occasions and different, though

neighbouring sites. Andrew Ezergailis (1996: 304) lists more than 35 events of mass executions in the area of Liepāja (including Šķēde, 3 km north of Liepāja) between July 1941 and March 1942. There are photos of executions which have been attributed to either SS-Scharführer Karl-Emil Strott or to the commanding officer Krüger, whose images were shot in Šķēde.³⁸ But, much to our surprise there are other unattributed photos from Liepāja that we found while searching for images from executions. Two of them in particular show exactly the execution site in Liepāja that Wiener had filmed. At least one of those photos most likely shows the very execution Wiener was filming from the other side, with a boulder prominently visible in the foreground of Wiener's film that can also be seen in the photo at the far end of the pit.



caption: Screenshot from Reinhard Wiener's film of the execution in Liepāja. 1941. Archiv Karl Höffkes.

³⁸ The mass execution that Wiener filmed took place right at the harbor of Liepāja, close to the lighthouse, which is visible in the background.



caption: Corresponding countershot (note round bolder at the far end of the trench). The archival provenance of the photo has not been established.



caption: Topshot of a [3D model](#) designed by Mikhail Chihichen (Kharkiv, Ukraine). The triangle marks the 23,9 degree angle of Wiener's Cine Kodak 8 camera. See also the 3D model below.



caption: Possibly another perspective – note the tall man in the execution squad to the far left, as well as terrain features (edge of the pit). Archival provenance unknown; copies of the image are held by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC, and the Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes, Vienna.

As we will demonstrate, the incident of two (or maybe even three) surviving photos or films showing the same execution occurred more than once. This coincidence seems evidence for the possibly large number of photos that were originally taken on this specific site. Since the vast majority of such images were destroyed by their owners who feared the incriminating implications or tried to keep them from becoming part of the family remembrance, the coincidence of images from two different photo cameras and one film camera, as in case of the Liepāja execution site, hints to a higher number of original photographers.

The popularity of the Liepāja execution site in fact is supported by a number of personal accounts (see Klee and Dreßen 1991: 126ff). Under the subtitle "Execution tourism in Liepāja" the publication "The Good Old Days" quotes several German soldiers who were present at or even took part in at least one of the executions in Liepāja and had knowledge about their regular occurrence. One of them even claims to have gotten the order to attend an execution carried out by the Wehrmacht, another remembers the large number of bystanders and the public nature of the execution, a third one admits to have watched the executions for roughly 90 minutes, accompanied by other Wehrmacht personnel and eventually an adjutant from the Naval-Flak-Company 707, the very same unit Reinhard Wiener was serving in, recalls how once a group of Jews, families with children, were passing his barracks and were led to an execution site around one mile

away. A fifth witness, Seaman Karl Heinz L., notes in his diary July 15th:

[...] we romp around in the water and try to flirt with the young Latvian girls. [...] Slowly we stroll back and not far from the beach we meet a bunch of people [...] At first sight you think that a sports event is taking place here. Yes, an event, although of a different kind. We have arrived at the location where so and so many snipers are shot every evening [...] Soldiers are standing around the site, I estimate about 600-800 men are standing here to satisfy their cruel curiosity.³⁹

And finally, the highest police officer in Liepāja writes in a letter to his superior on January 3, 1942:

Amongst other things a rumor is abroad that the execution was filmed in order to have material to use against the Latvian Schutzmannschaft. This material is said to prove that Latvians and not Germans carried out the executions.

The writer refers here to a rumor and not to a reported incident, but it should be noted that he does not refer to it as problematic, though he uses the mentioning of film as evidence in combination with the guilt of other nationalities, which admittedly could hint to fear.

All these records point to the involvement of Navy personnel or to the spatial connection of the harbor, the barracks and the executions at the beach, which weakens Wiener's position of the "surprised stroller" quite a bit. One of the reasons why Wiener was never connected to the killings is his status as a Navy Sergeant. The executions were supposedly carried out by SS or Ordnungspolizei, hence Wiener represented the innocent German Army. But a closer look at the circumstances sheds a different light on his story. According to Borgert (1999), Vestermanis (2000: 224) and Anders and Dubrovskis (2003), the Navy was actually the driving force behind the executions of local Jews. On July 22, Fregattenkapitän Dr. Hans Kawelmacher, the appointed German Naval commandant in Liepāja, sent a telegram to the German Navy's Baltic Command in Kiel, and asked for 100 SS and 50 Schutzpolizei ('protective police') men sent to Liepāja for "quick execution of the Jewish problem".⁴⁰ It should be noted that this request followed a series of public mass executions, mostly reprisal punishments (Borgert 1999: 59-60)⁴¹ that had at least partially been carried out by regular Army and Navy personnel (Vestermanis 1995: 254) as a letter of the Marinegruppenkommando Nord from June 18, 1941 proves, which defines regulations for these executions (Borgert 1999: 56). This means that the Navy stationed there was anything but idle and directly involved at least in the planning of the killings. While Vestermanis stresses that the first firing squads were recruited by Army and Navy personnel, Borgert can prove that even the mass executions starting in late July, which were carried out by the SS, were at least triggered, if not supervised by the German Navy (Borgert 1999: 61). The example vividly shows how the "cinematic memory" attached to

³⁹ Borgert (1999: 60). It should be pointed out that the witness rationalises the murder by claiming the victims were snipers (Heckenschützen), obviously a common (and unlikely) excuse, also brought forward by Gottfried Kessel in case of the executions of civilians in Pančevo, see below.

⁴⁰ "[...] zur schnellen Durchführung des Judenproblem [sic] etwa 100 Mann SS und 50 Mann Schupo, die gleichzeitig ordnungspolizeiliche Aufgaben durchführen. Hier etwa 8000 Juden. Bei z. Zt. hier vorhandener SS würde Durchführung Judenproblem etwa 1 Jahr dauern [...]" quoted in: Borgert (1999: 61).

⁴¹ Most likely Wiener filmed such a reprisal execution, which by definition was publicly announced.

the film, which so far has been dominated by Wiener, can influence the meaning and contextualisation despite contradicting features in the material. The sheer amount of bystanders visible in the film and the comparably prominent location (a dune beside the lighthouse, close to the harbor entrance and not far from residential quarters) ought to have put into question the sincerity of Wiener's recollections from the start.

Another incident which is represented by two short films that survived the war is the first Lviv pogrom which took place in June 1941. Unlike the footage by Wiener, which at that time had not come to the attention of Allied prosecutors, one of the amateur films shot during this pogrom, shortly after German troops had entered the city, was screened at Nuremberg. The 8 mm film, which shows naked women and men running around in terror as they are chased by single perpetrators, was discovered in August 1945 by US troops in a former SS barracks in Augsburg. In bad shape and partly burned, it was duplicated and introduced as exhibit PS-3052 into the first Nuremberg Trial. The second film, likely an amateur film of a Wehrmacht soldier with the 1st Alpine Division, is a much more recent discovery and was obtained from the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC) in Toronto, Canada by researcher John-Paul Himka. Shot on 16 mm film, it contains clearer street scenes of the pogrom, including shots of numerous bystanders watching the violence as Jews are beaten and humiliated.⁴² Both films show German soldiers present at the pogrom, at least one of them operating a photo camera. The street scene from the UCRDC film can be located with the help of Google Street View:



caption: Screenshot from amateur footage of the Lviv pogrom,
<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1004688>

⁴² See filmography for details. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC obtained a low-resolution copy of the film through Jean-Paul Himka. However, the UCRDC has since claimed that it can no longer locate the original 16 mm film.



caption: The same perspective of Bandery Street in Lviv today, as seen in Google Street View. The authors owe the exact location of the footage to Olha Zarechnyuk from the Lviv Interactive Project, <https://lia.lvivcenter.org/>.

Of course there are more reports about private and even illegal filming during executions. Perhaps the most striking one comes from a former Wehrmacht soldier, Erwin Bingel, who, while interviewed by US forces, claimed to own two reels of film which he shot during a mass execution in the proximity of his barracks on September 22, 1941 in the vicinity of Vinnytsia.⁴³ Unfortunately this material was never obtained by the authorities and must be considered lost. Bingel's case is special in that he claims to have filmed the executions in order to collect evidence against the perpetrators, which included incriminating witness records from him and some of his subordinates.

Pančevo – a Post War "Director's Commentary"

Perhaps one of the most horrible strips of privately-recorded footage is the execution of Serbian civilians in Pančevo, shot in April 1941 by a Wehrmacht soldier, Gottfried Kessel. Though the victims in this case were not Jews but Serbian Catholics, it vividly shows how unhesitatingly killings – including the killers – were photographed and filmed from close range. Pančevo is another case of overlapping filming and photography: In addition to Gottfried Kessel, who filmed the scene using 16 mm Agfacolor stock, PK photographer Gerhard Gronefeld simultaneously took black-and-white photographs. Whether he used officially-issued or privately purchased photographic film is unclear; in either way he decided to keep the photographs, and these also have survived. In addition to these actors, a number of Wehrmacht spectators took further photographs using private equipment: they can be seen in Gronefeld's photos operating their cameras and one of them even films the execution with a Cine Kodak Eight.

⁴³ Yad Vashem hosts an interview of unknown provenance with Erwin Bingel: https://www.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/documents/studies/Erwin_Bingel.pdf.



caption: One of the photographs taken by Gerhard Gronefeld also shows a professional camera crew. The cameraman may be holding a 35 mm Askania shoulder camera..



caption: A frame from Gottfried Kessel's colour film showing the same group of individuals standing before

the wall of the cemetery, immediately before being executed by firing squad.

The Pančevo color footage as it survives today comes with another, rather unusual feature. Kessel found it necessary to add a narrative to his film. He even made the extra effort to shoot little supplementary scenes, long after the war. For example, he inserted an illustration that explains why the 'partisans' were executed. In Kessel's unlikely backstory, they shot (as snipers) Germans by hiding within a family crypt in the cemetery, which they reached through a secret escape tunnel that led to a cafe nearby. He even filmed – as a reenactment – a nightly walk in a cemetery that ends with Kessel "almost being shot" by those partisans. A voice-over by Kessel over the entire collage narrates in a robust and humorous fashion how "those culprits" were facing their "deserved farewell". But the footage doubtless shows the random murder of civilians that are rounded up without any palpable connection to the attacks on German soldiers that surely did not take place in the way Kessel describes them. Obviously Kessel, not unlike Gronefeld, is not able to admit the wrongfulness of the murders recorded on their films. They both confess (Gronefeld admittedly ashamedly and anticipating disagreement by the interviewer) that they feel no mercy for "the partisans" neither back then nor today. Other than one would expect, the incriminating footage in this case even is supposed to serve as justification of the atrocity recorded.

Again, it seems possible that comparable private footage ended up being part of the archive the Atrocity Film was using. The fact of private filming and being filmed during executions shows that official filming wouldn't have been an issue even with perpetrators visible in the frame. As we will show later, other such incidents of official filming at incriminating sites happened and were reported after the war.

Official Filming

In addition to the private films delineated above, film archives today preserve a number of films and film collections concerning ghettos or deportations that most likely were statal efforts. Though we often do not know the precise background of the filming, their extent, subject matter, and high-level professionalism often point to a non-private context. In a few cases, evidence exists that confirms the involvement of particular state-level establishments, such as the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. It is this level of official filming that is likely to be more closely connected to a putative Atrocity Film.

P.K. Units

Throughout World War Two, both the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS fielded special units – Propagandakompanien, or Propaganda Companies (PK) – comprised of war correspondents, the so-called Kriegsbericht: cameramen (Filmbericht), photographers (Bildbericht), journalists, radio reporters, as well as other specialists. A novel approach at the time, the correspondents were regular soldiers and subordinate to military orders. In addition to this military chain of command, the Propaganda Ministry held discretionary power over the PK, enabling it to direct the units to procure films, photographs and written

reports for its own purposes.⁴⁴ As a result the PKs' audiovisual output was a mixture of largely documentary reporting and biased products suited to the needs of Nazi propaganda – both domestically and abroad. Beyond the furnishing of material for current propaganda needs, the PK were tasked to document the war for posterity, leading to a huge archive of unpublished film and photographs being accumulated.

Between 1939 and 1945 PK cameramen shot approximately five million metres of 35 mm film. Only about 300,000 to 500,000 metres ended up being spliced into newsreels, as well as into documentary and training films. All PK output was subject to a double-pronged pre-censorship process: motion picture film and photographs had to be cleared both by military censors as well as censors from the Propaganda Ministry. Any material that was not cleared for release was sent to the archives, including a separate archive of at least 50,000 Agfacolor slides, which was destroyed towards the end of the war.

As Budd Schulberg discovered during his search for incriminating enemy film in 1945, the bulk of unpublished PK film footage was destroyed around the end of hostilities in Europe: the entire collection of original camera negatives blasted shut in a tunnel at Rüdersdorf to the east of Berlin, as well as a complete set of dupe positive prints in a makeshift vault on the premises of the Olympic Stadium in Berlin. Both storage sites had been set up and administered by Reichsfilmarchiv, which was tasked with archiving all PK film footage throughout the war. This loss of at least ninety percent of overall PK film production – and closer to 99 percent in terms of unreleased material – makes it difficult to gauge the actual scope and content of this vanished collection. A handful of reels of film preserved at Bundesarchiv, primarily late-war material which may have arrived at Reichsfilmarchiv too late to be sent to Rüdersdorf, give only a superficial impression of what the destroyed films might have contained. A more meaningful assessment may be drawn from the surviving stock of PK photography: at least 1.2 million photos survive in archives today, including many unpublished images. Subjects covered include executions of partisans and civilians as 'reprisal actions', various series from the Jewish ghettos in occupied Poland, as well as roundups and deportations, including an expansive photo series from January 1943 documenting the deportation of the Jews of Marseille.⁴⁵ Since the PK often fielded both cameramen and photographers simultaneously, it is all but certain that PK film footage would also have covered these events repeatedly and extensively, both as a result of specific requests from the Propaganda Ministry as well as the PK's general mandate to document current events of the war.

⁴⁴ For an overview focused on the administrative structure of the PK, including discussion of its origins and the Wehrmacht–Propaganda Ministry nexus, see Uziel (2008).

⁴⁵ For the latter, see Meyer (1999). For a general overview on PK photography and surviving archival collections, see Sander (2008).



Bundesarchiv, Bild 101III-Duerr-056-06A
Foto: Dürr | 1941/1942

caption: SS-PK cameraman filming inside the Salaspils camp near Riga, Latvia, late 1941. Bundesarchiv, Bild 101III-Duerr-056-06A / Dürr / CC-BY-SA 3.0.

In fact, among the surviving PK photographs of the Waffen-SS, we encounter photos from the Salaspils camp in Latvia, showing SS-PK cameramen filming inside the camp. Further such occurrences may be derived from the postwar interrogation of witnesses during war crimes trials in the 1960s (but also in other circumstances) that most likely refer to the work of PK units of the Wehrmacht and the Waffen-SS.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-133-0703-33
Foto: Zermin | 1941

caption: PK men of the Wehrmacht, including a Filmberichter with hand-held 35 mm Arriflex camera, in the Łódź Ghetto in 1941. To the lower left is Willy Wist, who in 1942 would be one of the PK cameramen to film in the Warsaw Ghetto. Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-133-0703-33 / Zermin / CC-BY-SA 3.0.

Similarly, photographs of Wehrmacht propaganda units from the ghettos in Poland

depict PK cameramen filming – though almost all the footage shot at the time has not survived. All in all, it is probable that only a small fraction of PK footage dealing with anti-Jewish actions survive in archives today. The Propaganda Ministry routinely instructed the PK – through so-called Propagandaweisungen, or propaganda directives – to procure material for publication in the Nazi press and newsreels. But the PK must have documented mass executions and other atrocities as well, at least in isolated cases.

Despite the largely unfettered licence to take motion picture film and photographs of current war-related events, a limiting factor for the PK's visual production must be considered: photographers and cameramen were instructed to procure material that was suitable either for the purposes of propaganda (i.e., with a view to being published), or at least of substance for later analysis and as a source for military history. If neither criteria was met, the Kriegsberichtler were prone to abstain from taking photos or shooting film – a kind of auto-censorship that continues, under different and more commercially-driven circumstances, to pervade photojournalism even today. A remarkable example of this can be given for a Waffen-SS cameraman documenting anti-partisan warfare in Serbia: In October 1942 Josef Schiffko, a Filmberichtler of the SS-Kriegsberichtlerabteilung, typed up a report to accompany a recent batch of film he had shot in the Balkan theater of war, due to be sent via dispatch to Berlin. Schiffko wrote that on October 10, 1942, the entire 7th SS Volunteer Mountain Division "Prinz Eugen" was deployed to clear the Kopaonik mountain range and the village of Rosulja from partisans, an operation he was to document on film. According to Schiffko, the regimental commander had given orders that male partisans be detained for questioning, and to quell resistance "by any means." Schiffko explained that he had been unable to film his story "the way I had intended to, as no enemy resistance was encountered in the area to which the 2nd regiment was deployed." He nevertheless began to film: a night-time campfire, SS soldiers packing their gear in the morning, a briefing with Waffen-SS generals Artur Phleps (commander of the 7th SS Volunteer Mountain Division "Prinz Eugen") and August Meyszner (Higher SS and Police Leader – HSSPF – for Serbia), and infantry in the snowbound hills. But after these scenes, Schiffko stopped filming. His explanation bears quoting in full (emphasis added):

Beyond this I refrained from further filming, because SS men of Frw.Div. "Prinz Eugen" began to slay and shoot to death anything that moved. Women and children, including infants, were either beaten to death using rifle butts or shot. All males were shot to death. In Kriva Reka each and every supply of straw, hay and barley was torched. Equally all buildings with their entire supplies (wool, produce, cheese, grain, and so forth!!). I also refrained from filming how, from a distance of a few hundred metres, individual women doing gardening work were shot at using machine guns, and likewise herds of sheep that were equally fired upon, *for I assumed that such footage is not desired*. Especially since these actions were committed against standing orders and by men of the Waffen-SS (in camouflage jackets).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Schiffko's original report is located in the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, SI AS 1760 (Višji vodja SS in policije v Operacijski coni Jadransko primorje, vodstveni štab za boj proti tolпам; <https://www.archivesportaleurope.net/ead-display/-/ead/pl/aicode/SI-ARS/type/fa/id/SI+AS+1760>). A photocopy of the report was supplied to the authors by Darko Cafuta, Ljubljana.

Newsreels

Nazi newsreels featured quite a range of subjects for the purpose of anti-Semitic propaganda, documenting anti-Jewish activities such as Jewish forced laborers ("Juden lernen arbeiten" = "Jews learn to work") but also public humiliations and deportations.⁴⁷ A particular clustering of such items is found in the newsreels about the German attack on Poland in 1939 and again during the assault on the Soviet Union in 1941. Sometimes, as in the case of the destruction of Lidice the amount of material filmed seems to point to a purpose beyond the needs of current newsreel reporting.⁴⁸ One of Lt. Budd Schulberg's informants, Karl Rode, was a newsreel editor. Schulberg quotes Rode who claims to have seen more than once material that was actually not meant to be used in newsreels, but ended on his editing table by mistake as all the footage was developed by the same film lab in Berlin. While there is no evidence for a connection between newsreel cameramen and the Atrocity Film, the possibility remains that, as in the case of private filming, newsreel material may have been incorporated into such a secret film project.

Perhaps closest to the subject of this essay is a segment from *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* 567/30/1941: male Jews with shovels jump from an open truck in great hurry; under the supervision and shouts of a uniformed member of the SD (the typical SD sleeve diamond is clearly visible) they are instructed to shovel dirt and move boulders, digging what appears to be a trench or a pit; a number of religious Jews take off their clothes and are made to pose in front of the camera. While the newsreel commentary proclaims that the men are being put to work performing a "clean-up", the segment exudes a strong sense of dread and intimidation, and a more nefarious interpretation of the footage cannot be excluded. This has previously led the German Bundesarchiv to describe the scene as Jews "digging a mass grave".⁴⁹ The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum identifies the location of the footage as having been shot in Kužiai forest near Šiauliai, Lithuania, and that "the Jews from Šiauliai are later murdered and buried in this pit on June 28, 1941".⁵⁰ As such, the segment in question may be the most striking example of a newsreel item documenting the immediate preliminary stages of mass murder, screened in hundreds of cinemas across Germany, as well as in a number of occupied and Nazi-affiliated countries of Europe.

Other Agencies and Film Units with Possible Connections to the Atrocity Film

In attempting to establish organisations and stakeholders involved in the preparation (and possibly production) of a secret film project about the Holocaust, it should be noted that neither culpability nor authority may be squarely assigned to a single, identifiable entity.

⁴⁷ Scharnberg (2013) analyses the campaign around "Jews learn to work" in detail; a study of the visualisations of Jews in German newsreels can be found in Stutterheim (2010).

⁴⁸ The surviving footage of the destroyed village and the pioneers is more than 30 minutes long. Cf.

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/lidice>,

<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn556023>. The USHMM notes that "This film was made by Czech filmmakers for the newsreel 'Aktualita' and discovered in a secret German archive in Prague in 1945."

⁴⁹ BArch, Abt. Filmarchiv, finding aid "Jüdisches Leben und Holocaust im Filmdokument 1930 bis 1945", Koblenz 2010. Online: <https://www.bundesarchiv.de/findbuecher/Filmarchiv/Holocaust/index.htm>. An earlier version of the inventory also identified the SD man as a member of Einsatzgruppe A, although this seems based entirely on the fact that Einsatzgruppe A was operating in the area at the time.

⁵⁰ USHMM, RG-60.0282, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1000436>. Not being combat footage, the cameraman is not listed by name in the newsreel's title sequence, and to the best of our knowledge has not yet been identified.

Owing to overlapping areas of responsibility, especially in the field of motion picture film and Nazi audio-visual propaganda, more than one 'actor' must be considered at this stage of our research. In fact, any *prima facie* assertion that a putative Atrocity Film would necessarily have been an SS film is a likely assumption at best, as the involvement of the Propagandakompanien (ghetto reporting, deportations) and even civilian newsreel cameramen (as in the cases of Lidice and Theresienstadt) show.

Referat II D 1 (Radio, Photography and Motion Picture Film) of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Main Security Office, or RSHA)

The RSHA as the main SS-controlled security and intelligence agency of Nazi Germany had its own film and photography department, Referat II D 1. As of March 1941 this department was headed by SS-Sturmbannführer Reiner Gottstein (1910-1945). The Referat was part of Group II D (Technical Matters), itself a subsection of Amt II (Organisation, Administration, and Legal Matters) headed by SS-Obersturmbannführer Walter Rauff (1906-1984), who was instrumental in the implementation of the genocide using mobile gas vans. Gottstein's Referat was located in Berlin-Charlottenburg at Wielandstraße 42.⁵¹ Following a reorganisation, the department in 1943 was redesignated II C 1 with the slightly altered purview of "Radio, Photography and Film" as well as "Forensic Equipment", and was headed by SS-Sturmbannführer Ferdinand Mehlstäubl.⁵² By early 1944 Gottstein is known to have headed up an Einsatzkommando of the SD in Košice and Miskolc. Mehlstäubl, in turn, was transferred to Budapest in August 1944 as the local Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD (KdS) (Okroy 2005: 93).

With the possible exception of the Theresienstadt film from 1942, believed to have been initiated by the Sicherheitsdienst (Drubek 2016a), no film footage confirmed to have been produced by the RSHA is known to survive in archival collections today.

Einsatzgruppen Filming?

An aspect which seemingly has not been covered in any detail by the extant literature on the Einsatzgruppen is that so-called "SS propagandists" ("SS-Propagandisten") were attached to every Einsatzgruppe, in a capacity similar to the war correspondents of the SS-PK, and were tasked with a range of propaganda matters, including motion picture film. The purpose of these "propagandists" appears to have been largely in the area of so-called "active propaganda" (Aktivpropaganda) targeted at the civilian population of the occupied Soviet territories, as well as at enemy combatants, especially in the context of anti-partisan warfare, though a documentary function in connection to mass executions and similar atrocities cannot be ruled out. Hans-Heinrich Wilhelm in his seminal study on Einsatzgruppe A noted that in Kaunas (Kowno), Riga and several other towns in the Baltic area the Einsatzgruppe officially filmed the anti-Jewish pogroms it had instigated. Wilhelm speculated the motive may have been two-fold: to counter anti-German "atrocity propaganda" (i.e., in his opinion, by squarely putting these massacres in the purview of domestic nationalists, rather than the SD), and also because a propagandistic use of such

⁵¹ See <http://eba-www.yokohama-cu.ac.jp/~kogiseminagamine/Wannsee-ichi.pdf>.

⁵² See the RSHA organisation charts in: Trial of the Major War Criminals before International Military Tribunal, Vol. XXXVIII, Nuremberg 1949, pp. 60-85 (p. 68), http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/pdf/NT_Vol-XXXVIII.pdf.

motion pictures inside Nazi Germany could not be categorically ruled out.⁵³

That propaganda personnel attached to the Einsatzgruppen and their smaller subunits were authorised to take photographs and film footage, even of executions, is borne out by Reinhard Heydrich's decree dated April 16, 1942, which we discussed above, as it constitutes a deliberate exemption from the general ban on filming and photography:

For official purposes pictures of executions generally may only be taken on the orders of the commanding officer of the Einsatz- or Sonderkommando, or the Waffen-SS company commander and platoon leader of the Kriegsberichterabteilung. [...] To the extent that photographic records are being created out of official interest, the commanding officer of the Einsatz- or Sonderkommando or company commander of the Waffen-SS and platoon leader of the Kriegsberichter-Abteilung is to immediately send the exposed, undeveloped material to the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Referat IV A 1), classified as "Geheime Reichssache".⁵⁴

Heydrich's decree is crucial in the context of our discussion as it permits a number of deductions to be made:

- In addition to directions on how privately-taken films and photographs of executions were to be handled, it contains provisions for the sustained creation of authorised film and photographic material "for official purposes".
- The decree stipulates that any such material was to be sent to the RSHA in Berlin undeveloped, classified as "Geheime Reichssache", the highest secrecy classification used by Nazi Germany.
- While it likely had the technical means to develop photographic film, the RSHA must have contracted with a commercial film lab in the Berlin area for motion picture film to be developed.⁵⁵
- The RSHA department tasked with receiving and processing the material, Referat IV A 1, was also responsible for compiling the regular

⁵³ Krausnick and Wilhelm (1981: 542). Wilhelm gives no archival source for his discussion of Einsatzgruppe film activities.

⁵⁴ IfZ Munich archive, Fb 101/32. German original: "Für dienstliche Zwecke dürfen Aufnahmen von Exekutionen im allgemeinen nur auf Weisung des Führers des Einsatz- oder Sonderkommandos bzw. des Kompaniechefs der Waffen-SS und des Zugführers der Kriegsberichterabteilung hergestellt werden. [...] Soweit im dienstlichen Interesse photographische Aufnahmen gemacht werden, hat der Führer des Einsatz- oder Sonderkommandos bzw. der Kompaniechef der Waffen-SS und der Zugführer der Kriegsberichter-Abteilung das belichtete Aufnahmematerial in unentwickeltem Zustand unverzüglich dem Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Referat IV A 1) als 'Geheime Reichssache' zu übersenden."

⁵⁵ A likely candidate would have been the Tesch film lab in Berlin-Johannisthal, which had been commissioned by the Wehrmacht to develop the entirety of PK film footage. Since Tesch handled the films as they arrived from the frontlines, prior to being censored, the lab was at least temporarily put under military guard and the developing of the PK footage carried out separately from commercial orders. Any secret film material shot by the PK would have passed through Tesch, before being classified as such by the censors. We consider it likely that Tesch also handled confidential motion picture film from other state-level agencies.

Einsatzgruppen reports ("Ereignismeldungen UdSSR" / "Meldungen aus den besetzten Ostgebieten"), of which a near-complete collection was discovered by U.S. forces on September 3, 1945 in the former headquarters of the Gestapo in Prinz-Albrecht-Straße, Berlin).

On August 1, 1941, Gestapo Chief Heinrich Müller issued an order that might help to shed some light on this apparent effort to collect visual material by the RSHA:

Routine reports on the work of the Einsatzgruppen in the East are to be submitted to the Führer. For this purpose particularly interesting illustrative material, such as photographs, posters, leaflets and other documents are needed.⁵⁶

Since nothing from this body of officially-taken visual material – certainly no motion picture film – appears to have survived, the extent and scope of filming carried out by the Einsatzgruppen remains unclear.⁵⁷

Film- und Bildstelle der Ordnungspolizei (Film and Photography Unit of the Order Police, or Orpo)

Among the film units of the various military and paramilitary organisations of Nazi Germany, the Bild- und Filmstelle der Ordnungspolizei demands special scrutiny. Ordnungspolizei troops perpetrated mass murder during the Holocaust and were responsible for a plethora of genocidal crimes, including numerous mass executions. In 1941 the former film and photo department of the Technical Police School in Berlin was restructured as the "Film- und Bildstelle der Ordnungspolizei" (Spieker 2005: 2010). Throughout the remainder of the war the unit fielded photographers who took thousands of photos of Orpo operations. A 1943 brochure, "Ordnungspolizei auf den Rollbahnen des Ostens", included a photo series of Orpo troops raiding the Jewish quarters and synagogue of a town in the occupied Soviet Union.⁵⁸ The unit also produced a number of films, most of which have not survived. Members of the Film- und Bildstelle included German director Victor Schamoni and Erwin Strittmatter, who went on to become one of the most famous writers in the GDR.⁵⁹ The unit's archive was relocated from Berlin to Bischofteinitz (now Horšovský Týn, Czech Republic, close to the Bavarian border). When US troops occupied the town, they found the archives of the Film- und Bildstelle had been destroyed. In March 1954 the officer responsible for destroying the archives wrote to his erstwhile superior, Generalleutnant Adolf von Bomhard, the former head of the Kommandoamt der

⁵⁶ RSHA IV A 1 b, Nr. 576 B/41, 1. August 1941: IfZ, Fa 213/3. German original: "Dem Führer soll [sic] von hier aus lfd. Berichte über die Arbeit der Einsatzgruppen im Osten vorgelegt werden. Zu diesem Zweck wird besonderes [sic] interessantes Anschauungsmaterial, wie Lichtbilder, Plakate, Flugblätter und andere Dokumente, benötigt."

⁵⁷ Andrej Angrick (2019) points out that the SD itself also must have used photography for documentation purposes, as in the case of the mass graves of NKVD victims discovered in 1943 at Vinnytsia: Angrick (2019 vol I: 436). Often maps of the mass graves did not exist, hence films and photographs would have been helpful to pinpoint the precise locations.

⁵⁸ Richter (1943). The pictorial shows that the Orpo unit in question was accompanied by war correspondents, including a Rundfunkberichter (radio reporter).

⁵⁹ See <https://www.schamoni.de/die-schamonis/victor-schamoni-sen/>. During his deployment with the Ordnungspolizei, Schamoni witnessed war crimes and tried to relay his testimony to the Catholic Church. He was killed on the Eastern Front in the spring of 1942, near Lake Ladoga.

Ordnungspolizei: "Had my inventories of orders and war diaries [...] fallen into enemy hands, it would probably – or certainly – have cost a considerable number of commanding officers etc. their lives, or at least [resulted in] long concentration camp sentences, especially since the 15,000 photographs spoke for themselves" (Liersch 2008: 28). Despite this deliberate destruction of evidence, von Bomhard twice, in 1957 and again in 1968, transferred considerable numbers of photographs from his personal collection to the Bundesarchiv – after having removed any potentially incriminating shots. During a police investigation against von Bomhard additional photos were found in his home and those were less favourable for the German police. Christoph Spieker (2005) reconstructed the operations of the "Film- und Bildstelle" along with the surviving photographs and records. It is difficult if not impossible to reconstruct the work of the "Film- und Bildstelle" – both because of the destruction of its archives in the final days of the war and due to von Bomhard's intervention when handing over his personal collection of photographs to the German Bundesarchiv.

Only a few films that may have been produced by the Film- und Bildstelle have survived. *Die Tätigkeit der Polizei im Generalgouvernement* (Police Operations in the General Government), likely produced in 1941 by its immediate precursor (Film- und Bildstelle der Technischen Polizeischule) contains scenes of police raiding the Jewish quarter in Kraków, and of Jews being arrested and interrogated. The film may be characterised as a police training film, consisting largely of scenes staged for the camera. Another film which now resides in the trophy collection of the Russian State Film Archive Gosfilmofond is closer to actual documentary reporting, and may be an indication that Orpo cameramen documented the war in a way similar to the PK.⁶⁰

Official Film Assignments

Official filming could take on very different forms. Cameramen like Walter Frentz for example would film Himmler visiting a concentration camp near Minsk directly on Himmler's request. Willy Wist and Hans Juppenlatz on the other hand were simple PK men (and not SS personnel) who were ordered to film in the Warsaw ghetto and contributed some of the most gruesome images of the Holocaust. *Theresienstadt* (1945), the propaganda movie usually attributed to Kurt Gerron, was produced (shot and edited) by the Czech Newsreel company Aktualita, using civilian cameramen from Prague, and the film commissioned by camp commander Gemmeker in camp Westerbork in the spring of 1944 was most likely entirely produced by inmates of the camp.⁶¹ As such, officially commissioned filming in the context of the ghettos and the camp system often involved third parties. More than once filming was carried out as a local initiative, rather than as a result of orders from the top of the Nazi bureaucracy.⁶²

⁶⁰ The authors were unable to obtain reliable filmographic data on this film prior to publication. The German Bundesarchiv owns a VHS transfer of segments of the film. For a detailed analysis of the film see Spieker (2010).

⁶¹ Natascha Drubek (2016a) argues that all three filming efforts in Theresienstadt are actually parts of one single film project in the Bohemian ghetto which was started in 1942 and finished 1945 by the same group of German SS officers, which, in perspective of the Atrocity Film, connects the propaganda film from 1944/5 even more to the other events in 1942.

⁶² While there's a consensus that *Theresienstadt* (1945) was commissioned by the local SS leader Günther, rumors about the background of the first Theresienstadt film from 1942 prevail. It should be noted though that any involvement of 'Berlin' in general or Himmler in particular cannot be proven beyond hearsay. The only palpable connection to authorities in Berlin is the presence of SD cameraman Olaf Sigismund who

Some of the clearly anti-Semitic films such as the material from Bedzin⁶³ are of unknown provenance. The material from Bedzin is shot with less of a propagandistic idea but rather like an attempt to document some of the aspects of the ghetto life such as the mass gatherings in front of the main employer. So, the variety of surviving film convolutes (which will be the subject of the next chapter) hints to quite a range of official activities around filming and photographing the genocide that went well beyond the means of short-term propaganda.

How blurry the line often was between private and official filming is exemplified by the case of Reinhard Wiener, the cameraman of the infamous Liepāja footage, who recalled in an interview in 1981 how he once filmed the sinking of a British carrier (the "Glorious") during his duty but with his private camera. "This was the only engagement which was filmed privately by me, i.e. as an amateur with my own film stock due to the permit I had from the fleet command. I filmed it from the admiral's bridge while I was carrying out my own tasks" (Wiener 1981: 5). Wiener eventually handed the film to his commander who secured it in his safe.

Another short film that hasn't been acknowledged by historians so far is a 16 mm reel shot in the labor camp Amersfoort in the Netherlands (then the Reich Commissariat for the Occupied Dutch Territories) in late 1944 or early 1945. As a series of photographs from the same event shows, this material was shot with the approval of the SD officers present. There are two photographs showing Schutzhaftlagerführer Karl Peter Berg operating the camera (if only posing for the photograph).



caption: Schutzhaftlagerführer Karl Peter Berg filming Mrs. van Overeem representing the Red Cross during a visit in camp Amersfoort, 1945 (NIOD). The authors are obliged to Valentine Kuypers from Beeld en Geluid (Hilversum) for providing a link to this photograph.

worked in the Reichssicherheitshauptamt and who is visible in 16 mm footage shot during the filming of the first Theresienstadt film (Strusková 2011: 132 fn21). Thus far Sigismund, who also intermittently served in a SS PK unit, is the only SD cameraman known to us by name.

⁶³ See filmography below.

Jon Blair used this material in his Academy Award-winning documentary *Anne Frank Remembered* (1995). The footage mainly shows groups of inmates unloading goods from a lorry. Some IRC vehicles in the background hint to a visit of the Red Cross which most likely was the occasion of the filming. While the inmates being filmed obviously notice the camera and react to it the cameraman seems to document details of the event with intriguing precision, such as the writing on the lorry or uniformed personnel present.

Sometimes local authorities would commission the filming of events related to the deportation or the persecution of Jews, such as the films from Dresden, Stuttgart, Bühl and Bruchsal. While in Bühl the burning synagogue was filmed, in Stuttgart (Killesberg) and Bruchsal officially commissioned film teams recorded the deportation for the municipal film archive.⁶⁴ In Stuttgart another film was made about the so called "Lebensmittel-Sonderverkaufsstelle für Juden" (special food shop for Jews) which largely consisted of staged scenes that insinuated the Jews were actually better supplied than average non-Jewish Germans. While the deportation footage from Killesberg was allegedly recorded by a team of Gestapo cameramen, all the other instances were filmed by hired journalists with the purpose of documenting the moment of deportation (or the burning synagogue) for the local archive.

According to the research of Dirk Rupnow (2005) and Jan Björn Potthast (2002), the SS planned and most likely carried out a film shooting in the synagogue in Prague in order to produce footage for the Jüdisches Zentralmuseum (Jewish Central Museum). Unfortunately this material has not survived but the documents about the preparations for the museum and the film production clearly demonstrate that the SS had plans to commemorate Eastern European Jewish culture despite all efforts to murder the Czech Jews at the same time. Rupnow (2016: 312) elaborates more generally on the question of "Nazi memory in a victorious Reich" and concludes that, in case of victory, the Nazis "arguably would have pursued a more nuanced policy straddling the line between forgetting and remembrance." Rupnow rather (though not exclusively) aims at reconstructing a possible paradoxical coincidence of extermination and commemoration of Jews and Jewish culture and less at a remembrance about the process of murder. However, he concludes that in a postfactual scenario of the Nazis winning the war also the genocide might have been subject of a culture of remembrance, with works such as the Stroop album or the Auschwitz album (see Koppermann 2019, Kreuzmüller 2019) possibly being presented at former extermination centers turned into memorials as heroic evidence for an ongoing war against "international Jewry".

Resistance Filming

In Warsaw a Swedish resistance group was taking photos and also filmed in order to gather evidence against the Germans for the Allied forces.⁶⁵ The group was exposed in July 1942,

⁶⁴ For a detailed analysis of the films shot during the pogrom in November 1938, see Ebbrecht (2010a). The footage from Stuttgart and Killesberg are scrutinised in Ebbrecht (2010b) and Ebbrecht-Hartmann (2012, 2017).

⁶⁵ See Angrick (2019: 102) quoting Laqueur (1982: 131-134). The claim that this footage was shown in British and US-American newsreels is quoted from Herslow (1946: 259) while the investigation against the resistance group is documented in a report by Himmler from December 31, 1942. Verbatim text of the report reproduced in Lewandowski (1979: 86-99).

but allegedly some of the footage was edited into British and US newsreels. Carl Herslow, a member of the resistance group, recalls in his memoirs *Moskva, Berlin, Warszawa* (1946) shortly after the war:

Now, however, it seems to have happened that in the men's suits I brought on a couple of occasions from Warsaw to Stockholm, narrow films were sewn in large quantities. These film strips were later handed over by the Pole in question to the Polish Legation in Stockholm and sent from there on a route unknown to me to London and New York. In most cases, these films are said to have shown the Germans' outrageous treatment of the Poles and, in particular, their atrocities against the Jews in the Ghetto. During the interrogations that I was subjected to after I was imprisoned, the interrogation judges could not blame me enough for bringing these films to Sweden, which – according to them – then went to a number of cinemas in England and the United States, all with the intention of arousing the mood against the Germans.⁶⁶

'Viral' images were even edited into a British experimental film about how the Germans were treating the Jews in Poland as early as 1943: *Calling Mr Smith*, already mentioned above, shows how self-evident the connection between atrocities and their documentation on film was in the early 1940s. Other known resistance efforts are a film that shows the guard tower of the concentration camp Plaszow⁶⁷ near Krakow where notorious commander Amon Göth (infamous from Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, 1993) was ruling, and secretly shot footage of a train in Kolín, a train station in Bohemia, transporting concentration camp inmates from Auschwitz in open freight wagons in 1945.⁶⁸ Only recently an 8 mm amateur film shot by a shop owner in the Czech town of Rožtoky was rediscovered which documents how residents are giving food to concentration camp inmates being transported on a train from the Flossenbürg sub-camp in Leitmeritz, most likely with the destination Mauthausen. The footage was edited into the documentary *Todeszug in die Freiheit* (Andrea Mocellin and Thomas Muggenthaler 2018). Among other details, it shows SS and Wehrmacht personnel guarding the train.⁶⁹ It is debatable if the non-extant films by Erwin Bingel (mentioned above), who claims to have recorded a mass execution as evidence against the murderers or the photographs of Willy Georg, who, one could conclude, actively tried to avoid the perpetrators' gaze with his photographs from the Warsaw Ghetto, should be counted as resistance efforts, too.

⁶⁶ Herslow (1946: 259-260), our translation. Original passage in Swedish: "Nu lär det emellertid ha inträffat, att i de manskostymer jag vid ett par tillfällen medförde från Warszawa till Stockholm, smalfilm i stora mängder sytts in. Dessa filmremsor överlämnades sedermera av vederbörande polack till polska legationen i Stockholm och sändes därifrån på för mig obekant väg till London och New York. I de flesta fall lära dessa filmer ha visat tyskarnas upprörande behandling av polackerna och i all synnerhet deras ohyggligheter emot judarna i Ghattot. Vid de förhör, som anställdes med mig, sedan jag fängslats, kunde förhørsdomarna icke nog klandra mig för att jag till Sverige medfört dessa filmer, vilka - enligt deras utsago - sedan gatt på en mängd biografer i England och USA, allt i avsikt att upphetsa stämningen emot tyskarna. I full överensstämmelse med sanningen kunde jag endast svara, att jag icke haft den ringaste aning om att dessa filmer funnits i kläderna."

⁶⁷ Shot by army resistance fighter Tadeusz Franiszyn, reference from Péter Forgács who used the footage in his short "Meanwhile Somewhere ... 1940-1943" (1996): <http://www.forgacspeter.hu/english/bibliography/> "How it was then": home movies as history in Péter Forgács' Meanwhile Somewhere..../40. Title assigned by the German Bundesarchiv: *Filmaufnahmen von Tadeusz Franiszyn (AvT)*.

⁶⁸ The footage was shot by Jindřich Kremer: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=126294161899582&extid=GJOw57nnyd0EgfCt>.

⁶⁹ For a more detailed analysis of the footage, see Ebbrecht-Hartmann (2018).

Documentations of Jewish Life in Poland

On the eve of the invasion of Poland there were several efforts to document the life of Polish Jewry, both private and professional. Most unlikely though true is the story of *Six Cities*,⁷⁰ a film project aimed at depicting Jewish life in Poland in 1939. Copies of these films were shipped to the US only months before the war began and thus survived.⁷¹

But also private films that were sent to relatives in the US survived the war. In 2015, Péter Forgács assembled some of those films for an exhibition called "Letters to Afar" commissioned by the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews in Warsaw.⁷² These filming efforts are of interest insofar as they help to unmask the perpetrator's gaze. Sometimes, there are only a few months or even weeks that separate the Jewish from the German films. Since the Germans also invested into projects like the Museum for Jewish Culture in Prague, these films also might have been of interest for a documentation of the genocide.

Dr. Benjamin Morris Gasul, a US citizen, visited the Jewish quarter in Warsaw in 1939 only weeks before the German invasion during a stopover on his way to a conference in Moscow. He filmed two and a half minutes of 16 mm color film.⁷³ Intriguingly Gasul films the inhabitants partly in a non-participatory fashion (with a telephoto lens) and partly frontal, engaging with groups of intimidated or flattered Jews, filming them almost in a scrutinising, exoticising manner. The mug-shots we find in so many of the later filming efforts seem only one step away.

Filming as Depicted in Illustrations by Camp Inmates

The filming left traces in pieces of art made by inmates at Theresienstadt, Bergen-Belsen, and other camps and ghettos. These illustrations refer to the act of filming and in some cases depict perpetrators filming or photographing each other committing crimes. Furthermore, some of the images incorporate depictions of film material. The cameras in the drawings from Theresienstadt refer to the official and known production of the propaganda film(s) shot in 1942 and 1944. The illustrations from Majdanek and Bergen-Belsen, on the other hand, either hint to a relatively general use of cameras also within those camps or perhaps reflect the omnipresence of modern media shared by victims and perpetrators. This gives us pause to consider how the topoi of film and

⁷⁰ For a more detailed report see Greif (1999).

⁷¹ Efrat Komisar (2016) analyses similar efforts of documenting Jewish life in Poland and in the Netherlands before and even during the war in her essay "Filmed Documents".

⁷² See the website of the exhibition: <https://www.thecjm.org/exhibitions/46>.

⁷³ This material is part of a collection of prewar Jewish life hosted by the Steven Spielberg Film and Video archive with materials from Benjamin Gasul, Albert Günther Hess, Schermeister Family, Marcus Tennenbaum, Lederer and Bruck Families, Fuchs Family, De Groot Family, Unger Family, Lieberman Family, Sam Rafel, Katz Family, Julien Bryan, Estate of Pauline B. and Myron S. Falk, Jr., David Glick, Kurtz Family, Wolman Family, Herz Family, Klein-Sommer Family, Roman Vishniac, Schur Family, Verdoner Family, and Kan Family. A compilation of fragments from these films can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ejNhNSCIN7Q>.

remembrance were intertwined from the outset.⁷⁴

One example for simply covering the fact of filming is Helga Weissová's illustration "An Opera in the Attic", made in Theresienstadt 1943, which features someone holding a film camera. Weissová (born in 1929 in Prague), who survived the Holocaust and became an artist after the war, is most likely referring here to the shooting of the so-called "first" Theresienstadt film that also included filming of a theatre performance. The Czech-Jewish artist and cartoonist Bedřich Fritta addresses the aspect of "cinematic" deception in his surreal illustration "Film und Wirklichkeit" ("Film and Reality" 1944) of a film set in Theresienstadt, where a young woman with a yellow badge on her chest – half figure, half make-up-table – is applying make-up to the face of an frustrated old man: Behind them, in the shadows, we see a skeleton upside down under a barbed wire fence. The movie camera filming the old man is a hybrid of an apparatus and a human wearing an army boot. A wire winding from the camera morphs into a snake that appears to threaten (or tempt?) the old man. The binaries of light and shadow, especially the blinding spotlight above the camera-hybrid recreate the sense of artificial lighting on a film set.



caption: Bedřich Fritta, Film und Wirklichkeit, Theresienstadt (Terezín) 1944, Ink, pen-and-ink drawing on oak paper, 31,1 x 56,1 cm; Jewish Museum Berlin, Inv.No. L-2003/3/144, on permanent loan from Thomas Fritta-Haas, Photo: Jens Ziehe (courtesy David Haas)

The resistance fighter Andrzej Janiszek illustrated the story "Krysia Must Have a Brother" in 1944 in the form of a strip of 35 mm film during his detention in the

⁷⁴ There have also been efforts to let the illustrations come alive in a movie fashion. The short film *Helga* l-520 (2011) animated the Theresienstadt illustrations of Helga Hošková-Weissová (*1929).

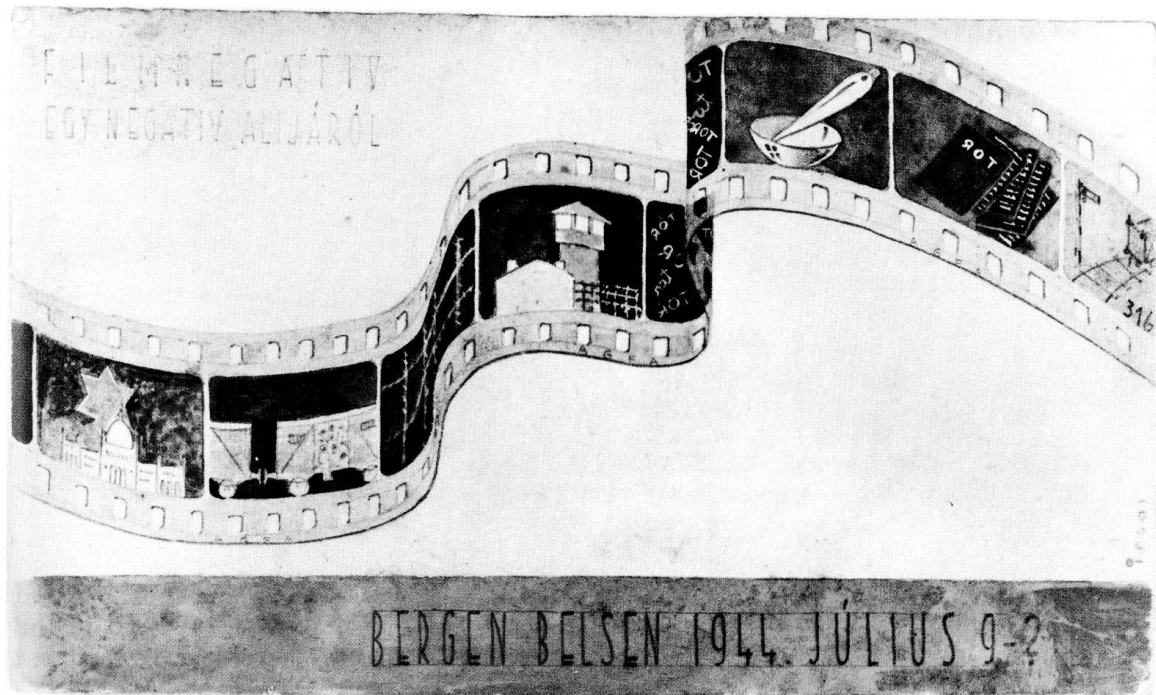
concentration camp Majdanek/Lublin. In this film-poem for his daughter Krysia, he combines depictions of Nazi symbols followed by an image of a crematorium and a figure being flogged while another captures the scene with a camera. This work offers a striking indication of the artist's awareness that the genocide was entering into mediated reality (the filming within the film!), but it could equally be read as expressing a desire for such filmic documentation. Simpler yet, it could be the representation of a typical scene, where a camp officer is filming another torturing a camp inmate.



caption: Andrzej Janiszek, "Film dla Krysi" Permission given by the director of the State Museum at Majdanek (Inventory number PMM-II-9-147). The frames on the left have the following titles: Studio [not identified], Directed by [SS], Script/Written by [not identified], Lab [crematorium], Cinematography by

[photographer], Main actors.

A similar example is an illustration by the Hungarian-born architect and graphic designer István Irsai called "Filmnegative about a negative alija" made in Bergen-Belsen in 1944. Again, the artist uses the filmstrip as format. He designs a strip of images of the deportation to and from a concentration camp, which constitutes an illustration of a 'film' about the hope for a final exodus to Israel. Here too, the depiction of the experience of the concentration camp on a filmstrip is striking.



caption: István Irsai, "Filmnegative about a negative alija", made in Bergen-Belsen in 1944. The illustration is taken from Wendland (2017).

Dr. Pavel Fantl, a Czech physician, made an undated drawing in Theresienstadt that shows an old man being filmed on camera. The person next to the camera is wearing women's attire. Fantl was potentially referring to Irena Dodalová, a Jewish cartoon producer and inmate of Theresienstadt who was ordered by the SS to direct and to edit the film in 1942.



caption: Courtesy of Yad Vashem. The illustration is part of File Number 443 of the Theresienstadt Collection.

These illustrations suggest either that filming took place in the camps and ghettos or express the hope that the experience of the camp would be narrated through the medium of films. It is possible (except for Fritta's caricature and Irsai's drawing) that these illustrations were made openly rather than in secret. They might be understood as messages about filming in the camps by inmates who had little hope of living to tell their story and aimed at addressing posterity to remember the filming. Perhaps less in terms of "informing about the fact" of filming, but rather in terms of pointing to the presence of all aspects of modern media during the genocidal proceedings.

Under the given circumstances of ubiquitous cameras and filming and in the light of private photography as a tool for propaganda (Bopp 2009: 47) the photo bans merely constitute exemptions from the rule. And they mainly refer to an exemption of the common use of private photographs: to be carried around and to be shown. While Himmler and Heydrich were afraid of photographs being found among German POWs or soldiers killed in action, they had no problem with this kind of images being collected by the RSHA. As the various examples of statal institutions either collecting or producing and archiving

photos and films show, filming was not only part of everyday life, but an ideologically integrated practice. The development of the perpetrator's gaze, understood as a productive and vital part of National Socialist propaganda and self-indoctrination, does not necessarily culminate in the Atrocity Film. Yet the examples of films from the ghettos illustrate an ongoing radicalisation that started with the simple visit of a 'touristic' site and proceeded to mug shots and eventually the unabashed filming of corpses. These findings suggest that the visual coverage even of the genocide was a self-evident part of this very gaze and that such films and photos were preserved more or less automatically or 'in passing' even when not explicitly ordered.

Related Film Efforts connected to the Atrocity Film

The following chapter lists extant and lost films related to the Atrocity Film.

Extant Films

Very little of what might have constituted parts of the Atrocity Film survives today. A select few films deserve to be scrutinised further, especially in regard to their production background and provenance:

***Der ewige Jude* / *The Eternal Jew* (1940, Fritz Hippler)**

A compilation film combining archival material and newly-filmed footage, *Der ewige Jude* appears as a crucial step in Nazi cinematic efforts to shape the image of the European Jews for propagandistic purposes.⁷⁵ It followed *Juden ohne Maske* (1938), a compilation film consisting of outtakes from various feature films with Jewish actors, cut and contextualised to convey a strongly anti-Semitic message. *Der ewige Jude* goes far beyond this nascent effort. It was in production for over a year, with Goebbels devoting considerable attention to what he referred to as "the Jew film" ("der Judenfilm"). Apart from its rabid anti-Semitism, employing the simile of comparing the Jewish 'race' to vermin, *Der ewige Jude* is notable for relying heavily on newly-filmed documentary footage. This material – most of it filmed in the Jewish ghettos recently established by the Germans in occupied Poland – reinforces the film's pseudo-documentary nature. The production background points to aspects that we encounter again in subsequent efforts to document the genocide, at least in its initial stages (such as ghettoisation): rather than relying on special teams of SS or SD cinematographers, the bulk of the newly-procured film material was shot by professional newsreel cameramen – in this case by civilian cameramen of the Ufa newsreel, prior to being rebranded and unified as *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* for the remainder of the war. Moreover, the film grew out of a project with archival ambitions: footage was shot by the Nazis in occupied Poland "for our archives",⁷⁶ with its ultimately intended use only loosely defined (Rupnow 2005: 240).

The film was released theatrically in Nazi Germany and in a number of occupied or

⁷⁵ For a detailed analysis of the film, see Hornshøj-Møller (1995).

⁷⁶ Hornshøj-Møller (1995:16) quoting Fritz Hippler.

Nazi-affiliated countries in Europe, including as localised versions. Compared to the commercial success of Veit Harlan's anti-Semitic drama *Jud Süß*, released earlier that year, it fared considerably worse, and was chiefly screened for organisations of the Nazi Party, the Hitler Youth, and the SS. But the film may also have played a role in shaping the perpetrator's perception. From the loan file of Reichsfilmarchiv, of which only fragments survive, we may deduce that the archive's copy was loaned out to the Reichssicherheitshauptamt at least three times, in April, May, and June of 1942. Also in June or early July of that year, Heinrich Himmler personally sent for the film.⁷⁷

Himmler's Official Trip to Minsk, August 1941⁷⁸

On August 14 through 16 of 1941, Heinrich Himmler conducted an inspection tour of the newly-occupied Belorussian territories behind the Eastern Front, visiting SS units and installations in Minsk and the surrounding areas. On August 15, he witnessed a mass execution of civilians especially arranged for him by Arthur Nebe, at the time the head of Einsatzgruppe B, to acquaint Himmler with the death-by-bullets process employed and standardised by the Einsatzgruppen. Himmler was accompanied during this trip by cameraman Walter Frentz, himself attached to Hitler's headquarters as a Kriegsberichterstatter of the Luftwaffe. As a result of the trip Frentz ended up being drafted into the SS on Himmler's orders, and retained a rank in the Allgemeine SS until the end of the war, a fact he initially failed to disclose during his denazification. During Himmler's trip Frentz shot both 35 mm motion picture film and took photographs, including Agfacolor slides. Of the mass execution arranged for Himmler by Nebe, Frentz later claimed to have only taken a single color slide, which he subsequently destroyed at the urging of Rudolf Schmundt, one of Hitler's Wehrmacht adjutants.⁷⁹ With the diaries and PK censorship lists for Frentz's film activities in the third quarter of 1941 missing from his otherwise largely intact estate, there is no straightforward way to establish if he also filmed the execution or not.⁸⁰ The 35 mm motion picture footage shot during the inspection tour appears to have been compiled into a film that was privately screened for Himmler on November 19, 1941.⁸¹ Remarkably, at least portions of this film were discovered by the Soviets in the immediate postwar era, most probably in the vaults of Reichsfilmarchiv in Babelsberg, and were handed to the American OSS. Segments from this film thus ended up in the three-hour version of the compilation film *The Nazi Plan* (1945, Ray Kellogg) prepared as exhibit 3054-PS for the first Tribunal at Nuremberg and screened in the courtroom on December 11, 1945.

⁷⁷ RFA loan file, RFA 5660, *Der Ewige Jude*. This particular file card is preserved at the Russian State Film Archive Gosfilmofond. The file card explicitly notes that reel five contained the Jewish ritual slaughter scenes, which were removed from a modified version of the film intended for young audiences.

⁷⁸ Title assigned by the authors. See introduction to filmography for details.

⁷⁹ For a detailed assessment of the available sources and surviving film footage and photographs, see Hesse (2007).

⁸⁰ Gerlach (1999: 573) appears convinced the execution was also filmed ("and probably for Hitler"), citing testimony from one of the perpetrators who stated the execution was filmed; the intended purpose of the filming is inferred from Frentz's position as 'the Führer's cameraman'.

⁸¹ See the entry for that date from Himmler's 1941 Dienstkalender, in his own hand: "Abendessen im Zug / Wochenschau u. Film von Minsk" (former KGB archives, fond 1372, opis 5, delo 23, p. 364). Earlier that year, on September 4, 1941, Himmler had watched a narrow-gauge film of a visit paid to the front by Dr. Karl Gebhardt, Himmler's personal physician. Gebhardt conducted medical and surgical experiments on concentration camp inmates (former KGB archives, fond 1372, opis 5, delo 23, p. 419). The authors relied on photocopies of Himmler's 1941 Dienstkalender. The source has also been edited by Peter Witte (1999).

The unusual circumstances of the filming notwithstanding – a Luftwaffe Kriegsbericht attached to Hitler's HQ invited by Himmler to accompany him on an inspection tour of the Eastern Front, where he witnessed a mass execution –, the film may point to SS documentation efforts that go beyond the surviving footage. Of note is also the connection to Arthur Nebe, who is implicated in the experimental gassing film from Mogilew discussed below. Walter Frentz, in turn, was encouraged – if not ordered – by Himmler to also film in the Theresienstadt Ghetto, an assignment he ultimately may have declined.⁸²

Ghetto or Warsaw Ghetto (1942)

First used after the war in the shape of a one-minute segment spliced into the compilation film *Du – und mancher Kamerad* (GDR 1956, Andrew & Annelie Thorndike), the material has seen sustained and widespread use in documentaries about the Holocaust until the present day: most documentaries about the Warsaw Ghetto will feature it in some form or other. The most thorough filmic treatment so far is Yael Hersonski's documentary *A Film Unfinished* (2010), which sought to reconstruct the production background and purpose of this abortive film project. Hersonski made extensive use of the historical footage, combining often-used shots with material that was only discovered in the mid-1990s.⁸³

The film survives in disparate form: a rough cut running to approximately 60 minutes was discovered in the vaults of the former Reichsfilmarchiv in Babelsberg around 1955. It formed the basis for the segment spliced into *Du – und mancher Kamerad*, as well as for numerous documentaries and compilation films released in subsequent years and decades. In addition to this rough cut, some thirty minutes of additional footage were discovered in the nitrate film vaults of the Library of Congress in the 1990s. This 'leftover' material is striking in that it contains a number of scenes in which the PK camera crew can be seen. A close reading of both the rough cut and the additional footage discovered at the Library of Congress permitted Hersonski to show that many scenes were staged or at least carefully arranged for the camera. Also in the 1990s, a 16 mm Agfacolor film, shot concurrently with the 35 mm black-and-white material, was discovered.⁸⁴ It was most probably shot by Hans Juppenlatz, one of the PK cameramen sent to the Warsaw Ghetto. Any contemporary sound which also must have been recorded (a microphone is visible in some of the shots) is lost.

Ghetto, as it was titled simply by the former East German Film archive (which in 1990 was merged with the West-German Bundesarchiv), is the most comprehensive example of still-extant ghetto footage filmed by Nazi cameramen. Generations of filmmakers have made use of the material, often attempting to appropriate it despite its obvious propagandistic purpose and origin.

Shot in the spring and early summer of 1942, the film documented life in the Warsaw Ghetto strictly from a Nazi perspective. In particular, actual or alleged discrepancies between the different social strata of the ghetto were shown in crass contrast, and often amplified through scenes entirely staged for the camera, such as malnourished and

⁸² What has survived is a certificate granting Frentz entry to the ghetto. However, after the war Frentz denied to have used this document, or to have ever made the trip to Theresienstadt.

⁸³ For Hersonski's film and the research that went into it, see the dossier by the German Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, <https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/nationalsozialismus/geheimsache-ghettofilm/> (in German).

⁸⁴ Original Agfacolor camera reversal positive now at the German Bundesarchiv: B 26123, *Im Warschauer Ghetto (AvT)*. The film was sold to the archive by the son of a former SMERSH operative who must have picked it up at an as-yet unknown location in postwar Germany.

destitute beggars being paired with affluent individuals in extreme close-ups. In addition to this, life and omnipresent death in the ghetto were also documented, as well as Jewish customs and traditions, again through scripted scenes and entire chapters carefully arranged for the camera. Though not the entirety of the material may have been staged, the surviving elements – in particular the leftover film material – provide ample evidence that even street scenes were often conducted and directed, quite likely in accordance with an underlying script. In relying on these narrative and pseudo-documentary devices, the film mirrors earlier efforts of Nazi visual propaganda, notably that of the German illustrated press, which had repeatedly focused on the Warsaw Ghetto and employed similar manipulative visual strategies.⁸⁵

As of today the footage is frequently used as illustration for the horrible situation in the ghetto enforced by the Germans. While it is obvious (and has been explicitly proven by Hersonski) that many of the scenes are staged and at times to a distracting extent, as Dirk Rupnow points out, this does not mean that the poverty and starvation depicted did not exist. Compared to the many other photographs and films from the Warsaw Ghetto it becomes obvious that this unfinished film project covers a part of the ghetto's horrible reality. That being said, historiographical discourse has so far largely ignored the issue whether the footage covers the actual catastrophe of 400,000 city inhabitants slowly being starved to death. The film shows extreme poverty, contrasted with seemingly unaffected individuals. But the reality of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941/42 was that a majority of Jews belonging to the Polish middle class would starve in their bourgeois apartments, a reality which is absent in from all the films, and especially in this film: a reality that would have been impossible to show to German audiences back then.

Shooting concluded in mid-June of 1942. The timing is crucial: principal shooting was wrapped only a few weeks before the commencement of mass deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto to the death camps, specifically Treblinka. As such, the film project likely sought to document – albeit from a blatantly Nazi-inflected perspective – life and death in the largest ghetto of occupied Europe while such an endeavour was still a possibility. In the context of a purported Atrocity Film, the material could have formed a crucial chapter – ghettoisation and life in the ghetto – before subsequent chapters on deportation and actual annihilation. Such conjecture aside, the film project is notable for its professional quality and the fact that it relied on Wehrmacht cameramen of the Propagandakompanien requisitioned from Berlin, rather than a special film unit of the SS or SD.

Homicidal Gassing at Mogilew

In 1947 a narrow-gauge film was found in the former Berlin home of Arthur Nebe, the head of Einsatzgruppe B. The small reel included scenes of a makeshift gassing 'experiment', carried out in September 1941 at an asylum in Mogilew, today Mahilioŭ in Belarus. Engine exhaust from a German police vehicle was conducted into a bricked-up chamber of the asylum in which a number of inmates were gassed. The film shows the pipe installation, as well as emaciated individuals being transported to the site and led into the

⁸⁵ For the most striking example, see the Warsaw Ghetto pictorial from *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, the highest-circulation illustrated of Nazi Germany: "Juden unter sich", in: *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, No. 30, July 24, 1941, and discussion: Arani (2010). For an overview on anti-Semitic coverage in the German illustrated press, see Scharnberg (2018).

building.⁸⁶

The footage survives only in the shape of a sequence spliced into the compilation film *Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today* (1948, Stuart Schulberg). Shots from this sequence – especially those showing the pipes leading into the makeshift gas chamber – have been used in documentaries about the Holocaust ever since.

As of this writing, the original film element from Arthur Nebe's home is unaccounted for, and it is not known if Schulberg only used parts of it for *Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today*; Schulberg's film appears to have used at least some of the shots in a flipped version.⁸⁷

Żydzi Polscy (Polish Jews) / Deportation of Polish Jews

This 97 minute compilation of various archival footage, originally located at the Documentary and Feature Film Studio (WFDiF) in Warsaw, Poland, is now part of the collections of Filмотeka Narodowa.

The compilation includes scenes of deportations, including Jews being marched along a marshalling yard and forced into cattle cars. Remarkably, the sequence includes a shot filmed from inside one of the cattle cars. This shot, as well as others, has many hallmarks of being footage arranged specifically for the camera, though the event that was documented could very well have been authentic. Perhaps used for the first time postwar in Alain Resnais' *Nuit et brouillard*⁸⁸ (FR 1956), where they were combined with footage from other films that have since assumed iconic status, including the Westerbork film, these shots have been featured in innumerable documentaries about the Holocaust up until the present day. The compilation likely was compiled decades ago and combined with a postwar musical score. Despite its widespread use, the wartime origin of the material and even the locations shown in it have not been established with any degree of certainty.⁸⁹

Films Produced by FIP (Film- und Propagandamittel-Vertriebs GmbH)

A mundane possibility exists in that a film unit of the German occupation regime in the General Governorate for the occupied Polish territories (Generalgouvernement) may have been responsible for at least part of the compilation discussed above: FIP, or Film- und Propagandamittel-Vertriebsgesellschaft mbH shot numerous items for the German-controlled newsreel in the Generalgouvernement, including anti-Semitic

⁸⁶ For a detailed analysis of the footage, including discussion of provenance, location, and responsible perpetrators, see

<http://holocaustcontroversies.blogspot.com/2016/05/german-footage-of-homicidal-gassing.html>

⁸⁷ Since the flipping is quite obvious in a scene with license plates these passages have been flipped back in later uses, while the rest of the material is still shown flipped: visible, among other aspects, by the red cross on the right arm of the assisting personnel. When scrutinised, more details become visible, such as further laterally reversed license plates and steering wheels (which sometimes are even retouched in order to obfuscate the flipping). It is possible that the material was shot on reversal film which results in a single positive print that has the emulsion (silver coating) on the same side as 'normal' negative, hence is easily used unintentionally flipped. The use of reversal film could hint to a non-professional background of the material.

⁸⁸ For a detailed analysis of the footage used in *Nuit et brouillard* see Lindeperg (2014).

⁸⁹ See the USHMM's notes for copies of the pertinent parts of the collection:

<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1002727>;

<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1004708>;

<https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1004707>.

propaganda. Among these was the pseudo-documentary short *Juden, Läuse, Wanzen* (*Jews, Lice, Bugs*) in 1941 which characterised Jews as carriers of disease, using staged scenes to show the disinfecting and delousing of squalid living quarters.⁹⁰



caption: Still from the film *Entlausung in Polen* (ca. 1941). Bundesarchiv, BLB 26977.

⁹⁰ Yet another anti-Semitic propaganda film on the subject of "racial hygiene" was *Kampf dem Fleckfieber* (*Fighting Typhus*), produced in 1942 by Heeresfilmstelle as Wehrmachtslehrfilm (Army Instructional Film) number 347. The film associates Jews and Poles with the disease and its spread by lice.



caption: Still from the film *Entlausung in Polen* (ca. 1941). Bundesarchiv, BLB 26977.

A similar film, quite possibly another FIP-produced newsreel story, *Entlausung in Polen* (Delousing in Poland) shows the delousing of Jews and their clothing, the latter being decontaminated in a gas chamber.⁹¹

***Deportation of Jews from Thrace*⁹²**

Finally, as far as the documentation of deportations is concerned, another film deserves special scrutiny. In 1943 a Bulgarian camera team filmed the deportation of Jews from Bulgarian-occupied Thrace in northern Greece, which at that time was under Bulgarian military control. The cameramen may have been civilians from the *Bălgarska delo* newsreel. Their orders may have come from the Bulgarian Commissar of Jewish Affairs. The film is remarkable because it includes scenes of the journey of the Greek deportees across Bulgarian territory, including footage shot aboard a moving deportation train.⁹³

Lost Films

In addition to the non-surviving film materials mentioned in Budd Schulberg's report and Albert Neumann's interrogation, there are only a handful of clues that point to lost films with a definite connection (at least in subject matter) to the purported Atrocity Film. In the

⁹¹ Archive title assigned by the German Bundesarchiv. See filmography for details.

⁹² Various archival titles have been assigned to this footage, discovered in cans in a Bulgarian archive postwar. See filmography for details.

⁹³ A detailed analysis of the film will be published shortly: Nadège Ragaru, Maël Le Noc. "Visual Clues to the Holocaust: The Case of the Deportation of Jews from Northern Greece." *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (in press).

spring of 1944, a local team of Aktion 1005 personnel was busy disposing of evidence by exhuming mass graves and burning the corpses on large funeral pyres near Dorpat (nowadays Tartu, Estonia). Unusually, the ghastly process was filmed. An eyewitness from the local civilian population testified to this occurrence in case files of the Estonian KGB.⁹⁴ Since the filming thus documented the inner workings of Aktion 1005, classified as a "Geheime Reichssache" (i.e., the actual process of erasing the physical evidence of the genocide), we are inclined to assume the filming was carried out by superior order.⁹⁵

Propagandakompanien (PK) Units

There are two sources which permit at least a superficial glance at the lost film archive of the PK units: Firstly, the routine reports of newly-censored PK film footage (PK-Zensurlisten), distributed in mimeographed copies to the Filmberichter. While no such reports exist in archives today, copies sporadically have survived in the estates of former PK cameramen. Secondly, the routine Wehrmacht Propaganda situation reports (Lageberichte) of which fragments are located at Bundesarchiv. These Lageberichte give an overview on PK operations, including sporadic mentions of filming and photo activities in the ghettos. The following is a chronological compilation of entries related to the Holocaust. The list must be considered very incomplete; comments in brackets indicate preservation status:

February 4, 1941

PK 666 – filming in Lublin's Jewish district (lost)

February 1941

PK 689 – Rolf Hermann Carl: "The Jewish Ghetto in Litzmannstadt." (lost)

May 13, 1941

PK 689 – Rolf Hermann Carl: "Jewish work camps in Litzmannstadt." (lost)

June 1941

Marine-Propaganda-Abteilung Nord – Ibler: "Synagogue fire in Riga." (extant – included in *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* 567/30/1941, as well as in a 16 mm compilation film produced by the Heeresfilmstelle (Army film unit), *Riga nach der Einnahme durch deutsche Truppen, Juli 1941*, 148m)

July 22, 1941

Luftwaffen-Kriegsberichterzug 6 – Rolf von Pebal: "The Jewish population of Balti being displaced by the Rumanian Army." (extant – included in *Die Deutsche Wochenschau* No. 570/33/1941)

April 12, 1944

Heeres-Kriegsberichterzug F – Blaschke: "Yellow stars (German original: Judensterne) have been shining in the streets of Budapest since April 5, 1944" (lost)

November 30, 1944

⁹⁴ USHMM, <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn505508>. The Russian original ("kinofil'm") would seem to preclude any ambiguity as to whether motion picture film or photographs were taken.

⁹⁵ See Angrick (2019: 675). Angrick speculates that the purpose may have been to produce a 'training film' on how best to dispose of the corpses, or that Himmler wanted to study the technical process.

Heeresgruppe Süd – Kameramann Proszowski: "Evacuation of Jews from Budapest." (extant – not used in any wartime newsreel; discovered in Budapest postwar)

Also, a situation report from Propaganda-Abteilung Frankreich for the period of August 16-31, 1941 states that during the "Jewish action" (German: Judenaktion) in Paris on August 19, 1941 the unit shot "documentary footage", and that "evaluation of the material [...] for the French newsreel" was underway. No such material ended up being used in the German-controlled newsreels for occupied France, and the material is lost.⁹⁶

Further Film Materials Produced by Official Agencies

One of the Dienstleiter in Kamp Westerbork, Netherlands (Reich Commissariat for the Occupied Dutch Territories), Kurt Schlesinger, wrote a brief history of the camp for the Canadian liberators. He recalls an incident dating back to 1940, when SS personnel (allegedly journalists from the SS newspaper *Das Schwarze Korps*) with cameras visited the camp and started filming.⁹⁷ None of this footage is known to have survived. In his dissertation about "The National Socialist murder of Jews in Polish eyes" Klaus-Peter Friedrich (2002) examines Polish underground newspapers and their coverage of the genocide. He cites two reported occasions of official filming: a group of deportees to Treblinka being harassed by Polish non-Jews and secondly a pogrom in Warsaw in 1940 both allegedly recorded as examples for atrocities against the Jews carried out by locals. Another incident of official filming took place in 1942, when SS cameramen and a group of inmates filmed scenes for the first film shot Theresienstadt, purportedly called *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt*⁹⁸ in Prague and in the Theresienstadt Ghetto. Finally among the Nuremberg files there is a report based on an interrogation of a Lieutenant Liepe detailing a mass execution near Niš (close to Belgrade) that was filmed by a two-man camera squad of Propaganda-Abteilung Südost:

The Lieutenant's report is dated 13 October, 1941. The report is sordid in its detail; the shooting of 2200 Jews in the camp at Belgrade had been ordered on 8 October, 1941. The action took place on 9 October in a forest seven miles from Kobin, and on 11 October near the Belgrade shooting range on the road to Nisch. No detail was overlooked, films and pictures were to be taken by an Army Propaganda Company. By issuing spades and other tools to the inmates who were to be executed, the atmosphere of a working party was simulated. Only three guards were placed on each truck to further allay the suspicions of the wretched victims. The inmates were happy to be leaving the camp, if only for a day of work in the fields. The soldiers were able to execute only 180 on 9 October, and 269 on 11 October. The executions were accomplished by rifle fire at a distance of 12 meters. Five shots were ordered for the shooting of each inmate. Articles of value were removed under

⁹⁶ BA-MA, RW4/338, WPr.Id, Lagebericht (PK) No. 41 for February 1941. See also Uziel (2008: 279). For an in-depth discussion of the PK and anti-Jewish subjects cf. Daniel Uziel (2001), online version: <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/academic/wehrmacht-propaganda-troops-and-the-jews.html>. The authors wish to thank Hans-Gunter Voigt, Potsdam, for compiling Zensurlisten entries from the estates of several former PK cameramen. The censorship lists in question are comprised exclusively of footage shot by PK cameramen of the Wehrmacht. To date, not a single censorship list for SS-PK film material has surfaced. We would be indebted for information on any such holdings.

⁹⁷ Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust- en Genocidestudies, NIOD 250i, file 511.

⁹⁸ See Lanzmann's complete footage of the interview with Benjamin Murelstein from 1975 who twice insists on this title.

supervision. They were later sent to the Nazi People's Welfare or the Security Police in Belgrade. The Lieutenant reported that the attitude of the inmates at the shooting was calm and that following the killings the troops "returned to their quarters satisfied."⁹⁹

The whereabouts of this material is unknown. None of these film materials are necessarily connected to the Atrocity Film that Budd Schulberg was looking for, but their subject matter and uncertain production background invite further research. It should be noted however that almost all film efforts described here were undertaken between 1941 and 1942.

Possible Archival Locations of the Atrocity Film

Budd Schulberg in his OSS report mentioned several film storage sites and vaults: Rüdersdorf east of Berlin, the Reichssportfeld area around the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, a salt mine in Grasleben near Helmstedt, and a film vault in Schweidnitz (nowadays Świdnica, Poland). The latter site is an unlikely candidate as it was used by the Wehrmacht to produce military training films. The other three locations share the distinction of having been storage sites of the German Reichsfilmarchiv (1934-1945). In addition to the film vaults of the RSHA, the SS and the various police formations (about which we know little to nothing), Reichsfilmarchiv warrants a closer look.

Reichsfilmarchiv (1934-1945)

Despite preliminary considerations and repeated suggestions going back decades, it fell to the Nazis to establish the first state-level film archive on German soil. Reichsfilmarchiv was founded on January 30, 1934 – exactly one year after the Nazis' rise to power. It was officially inaugurated on February 5, 1935 in the presence of Adolf Hitler and Joseph Goebbels, after a year of amassing films that would constitute the core of its growing collections. Over the course of the following years, amendments to German film law ensured that the archive would receive – at least in theory – a print of every German film and newsreel that had passed the censors and received a positive rating (Filmprädiat).

While Reichsfilmarchiv was initially supposed to chiefly assume a cultural function – as a repository for seminal films to serve as inspiration for German script writers and filmmakers, and as teaching material for the curriculum of the newly-founded (and short-lived) German Film Academy in Babelsberg –, its functions shifted significantly during the war. As a result of the political and military expansions of Nazi Germany, beyond 1938 the archive came into possession of vast quantities of film seized and impounded in the occupied countries of Europe. This influx of captured film was supplemented by films procured through clandestine means in the neutral countries – mainly Portugal and Sweden –, a convenient avenue to obtain "enemy" films ("Feindfilme") from Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Through these

⁹⁹ See: <http://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu/transcripts/4-transcript-for-nmt-7-hostage-case?seq=44&q=film>; Uziel (2008: 287-288).

channels Reichsfilmarchiv received prints of current British, American and Soviet newsreels almost until the end of the war, as well as numerous feature films and documentaries.

More pertinently to the scope of this essay, the archive in 1939/1940 was tasked with archiving the entire film material of the Propagandakompanien. A special subdivision (PK-Filmauswertungs- und Bearbeitungsstelle, or PK-Filmstelle) was set up at Tempelhofer Ufer 17 in Berlin. The unit catalogued the films in a detailed system of card catalogues which unfortunately have not survived. In addition to PK footage spliced into newsreels and documentary films, the PK-Filmstelle received the entirety of unpublished PK footage – including material that was restricted by the censors of the Wehrmacht and the Propaganda Ministry and sent straight to the archives. By early 1945 this collection of PK footage had grown to some four to five million metres of 35 mm film. While far from the only repository of restricted film footage in Nazi Germany, this collection can be said to have constituted the largest body of secret documentary film footage produced by the Nazis over the course of the war.

As a result of the growing threat of aerial warfare, the PK film material was relocated several times: first from the archives of the Propaganda Ministry in Berlin to the newly-built vaults of Reichsfilmarchiv outside Babelsberg, and later to the Reichssportfeld, the former grounds of the 1936 Olympic Games. Finally, the original camera negatives were moved to a system of tunnels adjacent to a limestone quarry in Rüdersdorf, some 30 kilometres east of Berlin. PK footage continued to be placed into the Rüdersdorf storage up until the end of March or early April, 1945. Shortly afterwards the tunnels were sealed shut in an attempt to hide the material from the advancing Red Army. A number of devastating nitrate film fires destroyed several storage sites of Reichsfilmarchiv either shortly before or after the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany. This included the entire stock of PK negatives at Rüdersdorf, and a corresponding set of dupe positive prints at the Reichssportfeld.

Various explanations have been furnished to explain this conspicuous clustering of film fires. In Rüdersdorf, local legend holds that the PK negatives were accidentally set ablaze by Red Army soldiers smoking around the cans of nitrate. On the Reichssportfeld an aerial bomb is said to have destroyed the storage of PK dupe positive prints. For the salt mine of Grasleben, a detailed report from the mining company put the blame on a head miner who accidentally tipped over a carbide lamp which in turn set fire to uncoiled strips of nitrate film. Budd Schulberg (1946: 6-7) on his mission to secure enemy motion picture film was convinced that the Nazis had "gotten there first", torching film archives in a desperate attempt to deny incriminating material to the Allies:

The fire at Reudersdorf [sic], consuming at least one million feet of film, and some estimates run much higher, undoubtedly wiped out a film record of the Nazi regime as seen from the inside that would have been of permanent historical importance. According to Germans in the vicinity, the fire had taken place only a short time before our arrival. The Germans, including the Burgomeister [sic], were unanimous in pinning the blame on drunken Red Army soldiers who, we were told, staggered into the Archive one night and started the conflagration with torches. The resulting explosion was said to have been so powerful that

several cans of film were blown all the way into the village.

Major Viergang scoffed at the Germans' story. The film had obviously been sealed up in the mountainside, he said. It was so expertly hidden that only someone who had known in advance exactly where it was could have located it. Viergang also expressed considerable doubt as to whether such an explosion could have been started accidentally by torches. It would have required demolitions, he pointed out, to open the sealed shaft.

It became more obvious in ensuing weeks that the Nazis had destroyed their most incriminating films through a carefully premeditated plan. On another tip from Rode, we found a second film archive site in a salt mine at Grasleben, near the Belsen concentration camp. According to the official report of the fire, it had been started by German workmen who accidentally kicked over oil lamps while helping British soldiers remove the film from the vault. We also searched the Glockenspiel of the Olympic Stadium [in Berlin], and there again it was the same story.

Only recently, information has surfaced that a stash of approximately 2,000 films stored by Reichsfilmarchiv on the premises of an old brickworks in Glindow, near Potsdam, may have been deliberately destroyed. From 1943 the compound had been used as a subsidiary of Deutsche Filmvertriebs GmbH, UFA's film distribution company. An eyewitness account affirms that, around the end of the war, a boat approached the brickworks at night from the adjoining lake which connects to the navigable Havel river, and that fire was laid to destroy the films. The resulting conflagration sent film cans flying across the area and severely damaged the circular kiln, leaving its smokestack permanently bent until the present day.¹⁰⁰

Keyword KOLBERG

Even more unambiguous appears to be information provided by Albert Neumann to his American interrogators. Neumann explicitly alleged that the Propaganda Ministry had given orders that, pursuant to receiving the keyword KOLBERG – itself a possible reference to the 1945 Agfacolor feature film released to bolster the will of the German population to resist the Allied advance – Reichsfilmarchiv was to destroy its holdings of 'secret' films.¹⁰¹ Indeed, in postwar correspondence with a former colleague the erstwhile director of Reichsfilmarchiv, Richard Quaas, affirmed that he had carried out such an order on or shortly before April 16, 1945, burning a number of films on the premises of the archive in the forest outside Babelsberg, as instructed.¹⁰² The exact nature of the films that were destroyed is unknown but are said to have contained documentary film, quite possibly

¹⁰⁰ Oral history interview with Peter Weckwert, Glindow, conducted August 2, 2020. For additional information we are indebted to Christiane Sellner, curator of the local brickworks museum in Glindow.

¹⁰¹ NARA, Records of the Army Staff (RG 319), Investigative Records Repository (IRR), Entry 134B (Security Classified Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers - Personal Files): NEUMANN, ALBERT. This file was only declassified in October 2019 at the authors' request.

¹⁰² BArch, N 1786 (Hans Barkhausen papers), letter Barkhausen to Karl Stamm, August 20, 1982. In confirming the incident, Quaas cautioned Barkhausen (formerly his subordinate at Reichsfilmarchiv) that the matter would be "unsuitable for publication".

PK footage.¹⁰³ Almost simultaneously, on April 18, 1945 the Propaganda Ministry sent a special envoy to the Ufa-owned AFIFA film lab in Berlin-Tempelhof, where they confiscated the camera negative of *Verräter vor dem Volksgericht* (*Traitors Before the People's Court*), removing it to be destroyed.¹⁰⁴

The available evidence uncovered thus far therefore suggests that the Propaganda Ministry carried out a coordinated effort to destroy incriminating films in the archives, film labs and vaults under its purview approximately three weeks before the end of hostilities in Europe, and a little over two weeks before the fall of Berlin. The possibility that film materials connected to the Atrocity Film fell prey to this premeditated destruction cannot easily be dismissed.

Atrocity Film: a Preliminary Assessment

How likely is the existence of the Atrocity Film from the perspective of contemporary historiography?

In regard to the mind game proposed in our introduction, we noticed during our research an effect which could best be described as a phenomenon of attention economy. As soon as we started to look for the SS Film, we began to find evidence of its traces. The assumed absence of evidence appeared to be a self fulfilling prophecy. To begin with, the sheer amount of film material about the Holocaust is astonishing: it ranges from private films of roundups, pogroms, and executions to semi-professional documentaries of ghettos in Poland, as well as a variety of official film projects that cannot be precisely categorised. In addition to the footage preserved in archives, there are numerous descriptions and accounts of film activities by resistance groups, PK units all over Europe and of newsreel cameramen present during actions against Jews that have not yet surfaced and are possibly waiting to be found.

We could demonstrate that there is film material from virtually all the steps in the process of genocide: the pogroms, the ghettoisation, executions, and starvation in the ghettos, the transit camps, the deportations from various places in Europe (the selections at the "ramp" in Auschwitz have at least been photographed), mass shootings and the elimination of traces ("Aktion 1005") have reportedly been filmed but only survived in one instance (Liepāja, though other events of individual killings survived), and there is even footage of the gassing of victims in Mogilew. The sole aspect that is exclusively mentioned in the report by Albert Neumann is the gas chambers (which is visible partially in the four secret photographs from Auschwitz by Alberto Errera, though). The closer we get to the act of murder, the scarcer the coverage gets and it should be noted that no film material exists

¹⁰³ The authors wish to thank Hans-Rainer Quaas, Gröbenzell, for confirming this.

¹⁰⁴ See the transcript for Nuremberg Military Tribunal 3 (Justice Case), 28 March 1947, statement of Karl Jacoby given under oath that "according to a statement of the director of the Afifa, the Ministry for Propaganda sent for and destroyed the negative of the first version before the end of the war on 18 April 1945": <https://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu/transcripts/3-transcript-for-nmt-3-justice-case?seq=1296>.

Potentially by inadvertent omission, various work print materials were not destroyed, which later enabled the OSS to re-construct a version of the film to be introduced into the first Nuremberg Tribunal as evidence. The destroyed negative likely contained footage – now lost – from the execution of the conspirators hanged in Plötzensee.

from the extermination camps whatsoever.¹⁰⁵ This scarcity seems to have three main reasons: most likely there was less such footage to begin with, secondly such material was bound to be destroyed out of fear after the war and thirdly: there are almost no survivors of the extermination camps who could report incidents of filming there.

The anti-Semitic and generally racist policies enacted during the Third Reich were not always consistent or coordinated. There are numerous examples of individual or group efforts to pursue the anti-Semitic agenda of the "Endlösung der Judenfrage", sometimes in ways that did not meet the expectations or the consent of the leadership in Berlin, yet still gained momentum, if only within a limited area. As late as April 1944, during a meeting of the "Judenreferenten"¹⁰⁶ in Krummhübel at the Polish-Czech border, the delegates agreed to prepare an international anti-Semitic conference ("antijüdischer Weltkongress") and decided to coordinate their anti-Semitic propaganda in order to claim the "necessity" of the Reich's struggle against "the Jews". But Hitler cancelled the preparations for the congress (Angrick 2019: 1160). There is no further evidence of what else happened, but it should be noted that the delegates agreed to start an archive with anti-Semitic propaganda material such as brochures, posters and photographs. In addition, three of the speakers during the meeting referred to the possibility of using films for anti-Semitic propaganda purposes and one of them even proposed the production of an anti-Semitic film. Untimely as this sounds as the Red Army closed in on Lviv and Brest, it shows how different groups within the Nazi hierarchy were judging the situation – and it proves that anti-Semitism was an active and virulent policy until the end of the war, not only in the concentration camps, but also within civil society including the occupied territories.

The footage shot in Westerbork is another example of such decentral and spontaneous filming efforts alongside the extermination of the European Jews. In 1944, without an order or a request, camp commander Gemmeker commissioned the production of a film about the camp and assembled roughly two hours of footage. As Karel Margry has reconstructed in the case of the propaganda film shot in the Theresienstadt ghetto, such a project did not require an order from Berlin: *Theresienstadt*, usually attributed to Kurt Gerron, was commissioned by SS-Sturmabführer Hans Günther without the explicit consent or knowledge of his superiors.¹⁰⁷ Hence, the speculative SS Film or Atrocity Film well could have been a project coordinated by an SS leader from the middle hierarchy.¹⁰⁸ In the introduction, we outlined six obstacles on the way to imagining the SS Film. These assumptions were 1.) that filming was uncommon in the 1940s, 2.) that filming did not take place during actions against Jews as a result of prohibitive decrees and laws, 3.) that the perpetrators did not film each other, 4.) that there is no evidence for any state-sponsored film projects in the immediate sphere of the exterminatory phase of the Holocaust, 5.) that the Germans did not intend to commemorate the genocide and 6.) that all existing footage already has been scrutinised and used in the context of memorialisation and now has

¹⁰⁵ What does exist are photographs for example from Auschwitz, Mauthausen and, newly surfaced, Sobibor: Cüppers et al (2020).

¹⁰⁶ "Arbeitstagung der Judenreferenten der Deutschen Missionen in Europa", see: <https://www.ns-archiv.de/verfolgung/antisemitismus/referenten/tagung.php>

¹⁰⁷ Margry (1992: 147) reconstructs an argument about competences between Heydrich and Goebbels which was "finally settled in October 1941, when Goebbels and the then Reichsprotektor Reinhard Heydrich concluded an agreement which, first, asserted the Reichsprotektor's predominance in his own territory and, second, stipulated that no propaganda could take place without his knowledge and consent."

¹⁰⁸ See: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130427022754/http://www.cine-holocaust.de/mat/fbw000812dmat.html#fn01>.

'iconic' status. This essay has sought to unsettle these assumptions. In addition, we have presented a number of documents and witness statements that either refer to acts of official filming at the killing sites, or point to efforts to collect films and photographs of the executions and other atrocities for archival purposes.

As we have shown, the search for the Atrocity Film combines two perspectives that are otherwise unconnected, which seem to have their focus on exactly this film. On the one hand we have Schulberg's approach, who searches for the Atrocity Film as a piece of evidence. Paradoxically, it is a kind of evidence that promises access to a historical reality no-one is willing or able to bear and which is therefore included in (or excluded from) the discourse of non-representability of the genocide. On the other hand, the Atrocity Film can be understood as the ultimate manifestation of prior propagandistic indoctrination¹⁰⁹) and the paradigmatic perpetrator's gaze. Intriguingly, also the discourse about the perpetrator's gaze rarely touches on the recording of the actual genocide on film or photographs and therefore excludes the subject of the Atrocity Film all the same.

In the light of the findings presented in this essay the Heydrich decree takes on a new meaning. As we have shown, several filming efforts in the context of the genocide were commissioned by SS officers specifically without consent of the RSHA. The secrecy with which Hans Günther had the non-Jewish participants of the film team of *Theresienstadt* swear never to talk about their work could be interpreted (contrary to the usual perception as a means of concealing a crime) as "staying under the radar" at least during the production, as he was filming without explicit knowledge and consent of Eichmann. One could conclude that Heydrich was specifying Himmler's decree because he had knowledge of such efforts and feared that they might fall into the wrong hands and backfire. However, one decisive aspect is worth highlighting once again: SS officers had several reasons to commission film productions, among them personal ambition (the hope to 'surprise' and impress superiors who were all too cautious and unimaginative when it came to filming); the hope to produce evidence that cast them in a positive light (which cannot be fully ruled out in the case of Günther and *Theresienstadt* and seems likely in the case of Gemmeker in Westerbork); the desire for private or at least internal memorabilia; and the belief that they were responsible for this kind of propaganda within their own remit of power, combined with a certain jealousy or fear of intervention. All of these possible motives are based on one important prerequisite: that filming was an integral part of modern daily life. Of course, all of these findings, assumptions and conclusions do not prove that the Atrocity Film was ever made. But they perhaps make us aware that many of our assumptions rest on inherited paradigms and beliefs that even slight shifts in perspective can upend.

The volume of material documenting the genocide is as expansive as it is profoundly disturbing. While the question of whether the Atrocity Film was actually produced must, for now, remain open, we might still ask why the historical account has in so many cases adopted film material from the perspective of the perpetrators so unsparingly, when there were less degrading alternatives. The potential existence of an Atrocity Film is a metaphor for a suppressed crime that is actually unimaginable. As the gaze of the perpetrators, often broken down into piecemeal stock footage shots, it nevertheless has long been part of our collective memory. In the end, the enduring challenge is not to find, but to recognize the Atrocity Film.

¹⁰⁹ See Bopp (2009: 47ff) and Latzel (2000: 13ff).

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Filmography

This is a list of film materials referred to in the essay, comprising both pre-1945 films and unedited footage as well as postwar documentaries and fictionalisations, grouped separately.

The authors have so far identified over 125 pre-1945 film materials that document the different stages of the genocide, ranging from newsreels and propagandistic documentaries to unedited footage and amateur films. Of the latter, amateur footage from the ghettos forms the largest identifiable group.

Italic titles refer to completed films that were assigned an officially-recognised title at the time, typically by the production company or author, with a view to being distributed and

shown to audiences.

Titles with an appended (A) refer to films or footage from an archival source, with the title having been assigned by the archive. In case of certain widely circulated materials that have been assigned different titles by different institutions, we give the most common identifiers.

[**Titles**] in square brackets and italics refer to films or footage to which no established title has yet been assigned. This typically applies to archival material that has not been widely used in postwar documentaries and history television, if at all. We also use this notation for important historical footage which only survives as fragments spliced into postwar documentaries.

The films are grouped in the following categories, with inevitable overlaps:

A: Pre-1945 Documentary Film Materials

- Newsreels
- Films (documentary features and documentary shorts)
- Footage (unedited, unfinished or otherwise 'raw' material shot on behalf of an official entity of Nazi Germany)
- Amateur films

B: Post-1945 Documentaries

C: Post-1945 Fictionalisations that Depict Filming the Genocide

Abbreviations: AKH – Archiv Karl Höffkes, Gescher; BA – Bundesarchiv, Berlin; NARA – National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD; USHMM – United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington D.C.; YV – Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.

A: Pre-1945 Documentary Film Materials

Newsreels

1941

Die Deutsche Wochenschau 567/30/1941. 35 mm, b/w, 828 m (30 min).

Films

1938

Juden ohne Maske. 35 mm, b/w, 1000 m (37 min).

1940

Der ewige Jude. Dokumentarfilm über das Weltjudentum / The Eternal Jew (Fritz Hippler). 35 mm, b/w, 1820 m (66 min). BA M 3002.

Der Jude im Regierungsbezirk Zichenau. 16 mm, b/w, 84 m (9 min). Camera operator: Horst Loerzer. Not submitted to the German censorship authorities but shown to audiences

of the Bund Deutscher Film-Amateure (BdFA, Union of German Film Amateurs). Camera original lost, copies at BA, YV, AKH.

1941

Riga nach der Einnahme durch deutsche Truppen, Juli 1941 (BA). 16 mm, b/w, 148 m. Produced by Heeresfilmstelle. Preservation elements at BA, M 2834.

1942

Kampf dem Fleckfieber. 35 mm, b/w, 473 m. Produced by Heeresfilmstelle as Wehrmachtslehrfilm (Army Instructional Film) number 347. Preservation elements at BA. USHMM RG-60.3298, Film ID 2504A.

1943

Calling Mr. Smith (UK 1943, Franciszka and Stefan Themerson). 35 mm, Dufaycolor, 10 min. Anti-Nazi propaganda short.

1944

Verräter vor dem Volksgericht / Traitors Before the People's Court. 35 mm, b/w. Camera operators: civilian cameramen of Deutsche Wochenschau GmbH. Originally made in two parts, reconstructed postwar from work print materials.

1945

Theresienstadt. Ein Dokumentarfilm aus dem jüdischen Siedlungsgebiet. 35 mm, b/w. Only three continuous fragments of the film survive: approximately 15 minutes discovered in Prague in 1964; another 7,5 minutes, including the main title, in 1987; and another sequence in 1997.

Footage

1940

Deportation von Bruchsal nach Gurs (A: ?). b/w. Source: Stadtarchiv Bruchsal.

1941

[*Himmler's inspection tour to Minsk, August 1941*]. 35 mm, b/w, original length unknown. Camera operator: Walter Frentz. Original elements lost. Fragment included in the three-hour version of *The Nazi Plan* (USA 1945, Ray Kellogg), screened at IMT Nuremberg as exhibit PS-3054.

Juden bei der Arbeit in Breslau (A: BA). 35 mm, b/w, 60 m (2 min). BA preservation elements: M 20230.

Juden, Läuse, Wanzen / Jews, Lice, Bugs (A: USHMM). 35 mm, b/w, 310 m. Presumably produced by Film- und Propagandamittel-Vertriebsgesellschaft mbH (FIP) in the General Government. German title assigned by Reichsfilmarchiv. BA preservation elements: M 17427. USHMM RG-60.3295, Film ID 2504A.

Judendeportation in Stuttgart (A: BA) / *Stuttgarter Kriegsfilmchronik*. 16 mm, b/w, 58 m.

Deportation filmed by Gestapoleitstelle Stuttgart. Source: Stadtarchiv Stuttgart.

[*Mogilew gassing*]. 16 mm (?), b/w, original length unknown. Camera operator: possibly Arthur Nebe (himself an amateur filmmaker) who supervised the gassing experiment. Camera original lost. 35 mm blow-up of a fragment (ca. 18 m) included in *Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today* (USA 1948, Stuart Schulberg).

1941?

Entlausung in Polen. 35 mm, b/w, 30 m. Presumably produced by Film- und Propagandamittel-Vertriebsgesellschaft mbH (FIP) in the General Government. Title assigned by Reichsfilmarchiv. BA only has a nitrate print, BLB 26977.

1942

Dreharbeiten in Theresienstadt (A: BA) / *Filming of the 1942 Theresienstadt propaganda film* (A: USHMM). 16 mm, b/w, 96 m. BA M 20619; USHMM RG-60.4637, Film ID 2842.

Deportation of Polish Jews (A: USHMM) / *Żydzi Polscy* / *The Polish Jews*. 16 (?) and 35 mm, b/w. Segment from a postwar 16 mm archival compilation with added musical score produced by the former Documentary and Feature Film Studio (WFdiF), Warsaw, Poland. Source material lost and provenance unknown.

Ghetto in Dabrowa Gornicza and Bedzin (A: USHMM) / *Die Juden von Dombrowa* (BA). 35 mm, b/w, 241 (?) m. Source: NARA, 242 MID 6198u.

Ghetto (A: BA) / *Warsaw Ghetto*. 35 mm, b/w, 1723 m. Camera operators: Hans Juppenlatz, Willy Wist. Rough cut discovered postwar at East German Film Archives. Nitrates destroyed, preservation copies at BA, M 17411.

Ghetto-Restmaterial (A: BA) / *Propaganda filming of the Warsaw Ghetto* (A: USHMM). 35 mm, b/w, 948 m. Camera operators: Hans Juppenlatz, Willy Wist. Additional scenes and take-outs which supplement the rough draft, discovered at the Library of Congress in the 1990s. Nitrates repatriated by LOC to Filmoteka Narodowa, Warsaw. BA, M 19675.

Im Warschauer Ghetto (A: BA) / *Warsaw Ghetto in color* (A: USHMM). 16 mm, Agfacolor, 106 m. Camera operator: Hans Juppenlatz. Having been filmed by one of the PK cameramen who participated in shooting the 35 mm footage at the same time, we do not consider this an 'amateur' film. Original camera reversal positive and preservation elements: BA, M 20814.

1943

Deportation of Jews from Thrace (A: USHMM) / *Денортване На Евреи От Беломориемо* (A: Bulgarian National Film Archive, Sofia) / *Die Vertreibung der Juden aus dem Weißmeergebiet* (A: BA). 35 mm. Film shot by civilian cameramen of the *Bălgarska delo* newsreel showing the deportation of Greek Jews across Bulgarian territory. USHMM RG-60.0466, Film ID 246.

1944

[*Burning of corpses near Dorpat*]. Exhumation and burning of corpses on funeral pyres by

a detachment of “Aktion 1005” near Dorpat (Tartu), Estonia. Lost.

Judendeportation in Budapest (A: BA). 35 mm, b/w, ? m. Camera operator: Stanislaus Proszowski. PK footage, unpublished at the time. Source: National Film Institute, Budapest, Hungary. BA preservation elements: M 21113.

[*Westerbork*]. 16 mm, b/w, ca. 150 Minuten.

Amateur Films

1939

[Benjamin Gasul Collection]. Kodachrome color film footage documenting Dr. Benjamin Gasul's lecture tour in Europe in 1939. Scenes include the Jewish quarter in Warsaw just months before the outbreak of World War II. USHMM, RG Number: RG-60.4567, Film ID: 2832.

1941

[*Löwenstadt Ghetto*]. 16 mm, b/w. Scenes from the Brzeziny Ghetto during winter, including the public hanging of approximately ten civilians. USHMM RG-60.4913, Film 2910. The USHMM presently lists the film's title as *Łódź Ghetto*. Architectural features (the synagogue) and an eyewitness account of the hanging confirm the location as nearby Brzeziny, about 20 km east of Łódź.

[*Hanging in Zhitomir*]. 8 mm, b/w. Amateur film with scenes of the hanging of Mosche Kogan and Wolf Kieper in Zhitomir on August 7, 1941. AKH, M 3349.

Infanterieregiment Großdeutschland im Banat 1941 (A: BA) / *Reprisal action by the Grossdeutschland regiment in Pančevo* (A: USHMM). 16 mm, Agfacolor. Camera operator: Gottfried Kessel. Original camera reversal positive and preservation elements: BA, M 21107 .

Judenexekution in Libau 1941 (A: BA) / *Einsatzgruppen shooting of Jews, Latvia* (A: USHMM). 8 mm, b/w. Camera operator: Reinhard Wiener. Camera original: AKH.

[*Lvov pogrom*]. 8 mm, b/w. Amateur film seized in 1945 in an SS barracks near Augsburg and shown at the IMT as exhibit PS-3052. Camera original and preservation elements at NARA, ARC Identifier 43456.

[*Lvov pogrom (UCRDC)*]. 16 mm (?), b/w. Amateur film preserved at the Ukrainian Canadian Research and Documentation Centre (UCRDC), Toronto, Canada. DVD copy at USHMM, RG-60.1412, Film ID 2983.

[Alfons Ziolkowski films]. 8 mm, b/w. Amateur footage shot by Polish citizen Alfons Ziolkowski in the Warsaw Ghetto and used by Canadian director Eric Bednarski in his film *Warsaw: A City Divided* (2019). Archive location: unknown.

1941?

[*Sremska Mitrovica*]. 8 mm (?), b/w. Shooting of civilians – possibly Jews – in Sremska Mitrovica, ca. winter of 1941-1942. Preservation elements at Jugoslovenska Kinoteka, Belgrade.

[*SS amateur film (Osteinsatz)*]. 9,5 mm, b/w, approximately 108 m. Civilians, probably in occupied Soviet territory, digging a mass grave, with SS soldiers looking on. Date likely is

1941. Source: AKH, M 601.

[*Warsaw Ghetto (film with anti-Semitic intertitles)*]. 8 mm, b/w, approximately 45 m. Source: AKH, M 2593.

1941–1943?

[*Luftwaffe officers in the Warsaw Ghetto*] / *Ghetto inhabitants, ruins, Germans, starving children* (A: USHMM) / *Warsaw Ghetto* (A: YIVO). 16 mm, b/w. USHMM RG-60.0577, Film ID 237.

1941–1944

[Götz Hirt-Reger Collection]. 16 mm, b/w and color. Includes: Jewish forced laborers in a Pionier camp; Jews clearing rubble in Warsaw; ghetto visit (Krakow?); corpses of executed Jews hanging from a gallow. Hirt-Reger was an ambitious amateur cameraman and recruited into the PK mid-war; he continued to film privately alongside his official filming. Camera originals: AKH.

1945

[*Amersfoort camp*]. 16 mm, b/w, Reich Commissariat for the Occupied Dutch Territories. Archival provenance: Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid.

Transport ewakuacyjny więźniów KL Auschwitz przez stację Kolin, 24.01.1945 (A: Auschwitz Birkenau State Museum) / *Evakuierungstransport Auschwitz – Kolin am 24.01.1945* (A: BA). 8 mm, b/w, ? m. Camera operator: Jindřich Kremer. Railway transport of camp inmates from Auschwitz passing through Kolín, January 24, 1945. In 1987 the Auschwitz Birkenau State Museum obtained an 8 mm copy of the film from the Czechoslovakian Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes. The whereabouts of the camera original could not be ascertained.. BA 16 mm preservation elements: M 21801.

[Amateur film from Roztoky], 8 mm, b/w. Railway transport of camp inmates from Leitmeritz (sub-camp of the concentration camp Flossenbürg) stopping in Roztoky.

1941-1944?

[]: Two very short 8 mm (?) fragments inserted as poor blow-up shots into *Velikaia Otechestvennaia / The Great Patriotic War* (USSR 1965, Roman Karmen): German soldiers executing a hooded individual with a shot to the head, and toppling them into a pit. Archival provenance unknown, believed to have come from a Soviet source.

B: Post-1945 documentaries

Bednarski, Eric. 2019. *Warsaw: A City Divided*. Pado Studio Films.

Blair, Jon. 1995. *Anne Frank Remembered*. The Jon Blair Film Company.

Duyns, Cherry. 1994. *Gezicht van het verleden*. VPRO.

Eder, Harriet and Thomas Kufus. 1990. *Mein Krieg*. Känguruh-Film, Zero One Film et al.

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Müllner, Jörg. 2020. *Wir im Krieg – Privatfilme aus Hitlers Reich*. ZDF, History Media.

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Thorndike, Andrew and Annelie. *Du – und mancher Kamerad*. DEFA-Studio für Wochenschau und Dokumentarfilme.

C: Post-1945 fictionalisations that depict filming the genocide

Avnet, Jon. 2001. *Uprising*. Avnet/Kerner Productions, Brooklyn Films, Raffaella Productions. TV film.

Bryných, Zbyněk. 1963. *Transport z ráje / Transport from Paradise*. Filmové studio Barrandov.

Chomsky, Marvin J. 1978. *Holocaust*. Titus Productions. TV series.

Fassbinder, Rainer Werner. 1981. *Lili Marleen*. Rialto Film, Roxy Film, CIP Filmproduktion et al.

Jimenez, Cédric. 2017. *HHhH / The Man with the Iron Heart / Killing Heydrich*. FilmNation Entertainment, Echo Lake Entertainment, Lantern Entertainment et al.

Nemes, László. 2015. *Saul fia / Son of Saul*. Laokoon Filmgroup.

Polanski, Roman. 2002. *The Pianist*. R.P. Productions, Heritage Films, Studio Babelsberg et al.

Spotnitz, Frank. 2015-2019. *The Man in the High Castle*. Amazon Studios, Big Light Productions, Electric Shepherd Productions et al. TV series.

Targarona, Mar. 2018. *El fotógrafo de Mauthausen / The Photographer of Mauthausen*. Film Factory, FilmTeam et al.

Wajda, Andrzej. 1990. *Korczak*. Zespół Filmowy Perspektywa, Ziegler Film et al.

Zwick, Edward. 2008. *Defiance*. Grosvenor Park Productions, The Bedford Falls Company et al.

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