

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE, PROPAGANDA AND CENSORSHIP
ELEMENTS OF *WELT IM FILM*, BRITISH AND AMERICAN
NEWSREEL SERIES FOR POSTWAR
GERMAN AUDIENCES

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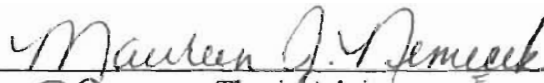
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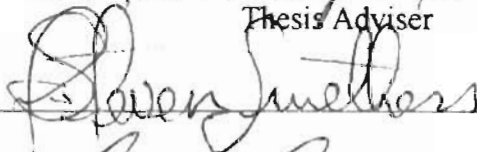
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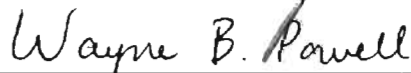
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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I became interested in *Welt im Film* during my introductory courses in Mass Communications at Oklahoma State University in the Fall of 1998, during which time I was exposed to the various methods of research and to the various mass communications theories. I had originally planned to conduct research into newsreels in general, and specifically, into those newsreels of the Korean War era, 1950-52, those that I vaguely remember as a child. I changed my approach, however, after I found references to *Welt im Film* in various publications, and I became intrigued with the concept of the conqueror attempting to reeducate the conquered, and my research into the series took off from there.

The first material I came across on *Welt im Film* was written by such people as Roger Smither and Wolfgang Klaue. Smither is the "Keeper of the Film" at the Imperial War Museum in London, and has been involved in film research for many years. His material prompted me to delve further into *Welt im Film*, and that prompting took me to College Park, Maryland, near Washington, D.C., to the National Archives Building there. I was able to locate many documents related to the series and correspondence between Allied film officials at the National Archives, and those documents and correspondence are the basis of my thesis.

I owe a special acknowledgment to my adviser, Dr. Maureen Nemecek, whose knowledge of film has been invaluable in my development of this thesis. She kept me

focused and was always able to prevent me from wandering too far off course in my pursuit of material related to my thesis. I feel very fortunate that I had the benefit of her expertise during this time.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Steven Smethers, a member of my thesis committee, whose instruction on methodology contributed greatly to my understanding of the various aspects of research, and Dr. L.G. Moses of the OSU History Department, who has helped me understand the methods of historical research. I would also like to thank Dr. Paul Smeyak, the third member of my thesis committee, who has not only helped me with this project, but has shown confidence in me in a number of other ways and has kept my spirits soaring during the challenging days of graduate school. I would like to thank Bettina Roensberg of Germany, as well, for her help in translating segments of *Welt im Film* from German to English. She is a master of both languages.

I would also like to express appreciation to my family, especially to my wife, Delima, who made her own sacrifices during the time of development of this thesis. My children, Shane and Cassandra, have been wonderful in their understanding of the intensity of this endeavor and in taking care of certain tasks and fulfilling certain responsibilities that would normally fall on me.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the psychological warfare, censorship and propaganda aspects of *Welt im Film*, a newsreel series produced by Britain and the United States for showing to postwar German movie-goers in occupied West Germany. The thesis focuses on three periods of *Welt im Film*; the first represented by the initial 13 issues, produced for showing during May, June, July and early August 1945, called herein the “Psychological Warfare” period; the second represented by issues produced for showing during August 1945 through mid-1947, referred to herein as the “Informational” or “Political Re-Education” period; and the third represented by issues produced for showing during the mid-1947 to 1952 period, herein referred to as the “Anti-Communist Propaganda” period. These three periods have been defined by the author according to dominate themes of each era and the apparent desired effect of those themes by the people who produced the series.

Research Problem

Welt im Film is studied in the context of overall Allied film policy for German audiences and in the context of the Marshall Plan, and specifically, its re-education efforts. Numerous examples of correspondence, policy statements and directives that circulated among civilians and military personnel who were involved in the production of *Welt im Film* were used in this research project. Taken as a whole, these documents demonstrate a deliberate propaganda and censorship campaign by Allied officials aimed at re-educating the German people.

In addition to correspondence related directly to *Welt im Film*, copies of letters have been obtained that illustrate Allied film policy in terms of what military leaders would allow and not allow German audiences to view. For example, in a 1946 letter to the Film, Theater and Music Control Branch of the U.S. Forces in the European Theater, Brig. Gen. Robert A. McClure, director of Information Control, ordered that *The Maltese Falcon* be withdrawn from circulation in Germany because the film “simply perpetuates the Goebbels’ Chicago gangster propaganda line....” He expressed astonishment that it had been allowed to play in German theaters.¹

Another letter from a colonel in Information Control describes those elements that would make a film unsuitable for German audiences. Films that “glorify ideology of Fascism, Nazism and racial distinction,” or “subvert or pervert German history,” or “ridicule ... Allied peoples, their governments, their political or national leaders” were forbidden.² Other communications obtained include lists of Hollywood feature films deemed suitable or unsuitable for showing in occupied Germany.³

In addition to policy statements, guidelines, correspondence and other documents obtained from the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, actual *Welt im Film* issues are used in this thesis to illustrate prevailing themes in an effort to understand the philosophies behind the series during the three periods under study. Issue No. 13⁴ is used to illustrate these things in the first era, Issue No. 82⁵ is used for the second era, and segments from various issues produced during the Berlin Airlift in 1948 and 1949⁶ are used for the third era. Issue No. 13 of *Welt im Film* was used primarily because of its ready availability at the National Archives. An examination of one of the first 10 issues would have been ideal, but none of those issues are available

for viewing at the National Archives. Issue No. 82 was used to illustrate the second era under study because it represents an overview of 1946 and could be analyzed as a summation of that year. Entire *Welt im Film* issues from the third period being studied were not available at the National Archives, so a compilation of Berlin Airlift footage was used for the analysis of the third era.

Research Questions

The *Welt im Film* newsreel series can be divided roughly into three periods. The first extended from the end of the war until August 1945, and was a period of "control propaganda" and of "psychological warfare," during which the Allies felt the need to punish the Germans for their role in World War II while teaching them the virtues of Democracy. The second period extended to mid-1947, during which time the series began to resemble an actual newsreel series with reports from around the globe, but with heavy censorship and subject matter approved only at the highest level of the military command. The third period extended from the middle of 1947, through the Berlin Airlift, and into the early 1950s, and was basically a period of anti-Communist propaganda.

The research questions for this thesis are: What was the extent of the Allied propaganda and censorship policy in the newsreel series *Welt im Film* during the various eras in the context of overall film policy toward postwar Germany? How was that policy carried out? Was this policy effective?

To answer these questions, correspondence among various military and civilian officials involved in the production of *Welt im Film* and in film distribution to occupied

Germany in general are examined to determine overall film policy and how that policy applied to *Welt im Film*. Shifts in policy over the period being studied are also noted.

Significance of Study

This study attempts to determine the state of propaganda and censorship immediately following World War II as it was applied to films viewed by German audiences. The study offers an insight into such efforts in general, but is also of value in determining the effectiveness of this particular effort in shaping German society and government during the postwar period to the present day.

Was the effort a success? Were the Germans “re-educated” as Allied officials had envisioned? The current status of German government, which by most estimations is a legitimate democracy, would suggest that the effort was a success, and that the Germans were, indeed, re-educated in Western ways. But at what price? Was the truth sacrificed to any degree to achieve this end? And if so, can it be justified? And how much credit can such efforts as *Welt im Film* take?

Background

Movie-goers in postwar Germany were treated to a mandatory dose of *Welt im Film*, which was designed to hammer home defeat and guilt themes and “we have a plan” democratic idealism. But the series was designed to punish, as well, and so the German people were presented with harsh images of Germans being executed, something German prisoners of war held in Britain said even the Nazis would not have done.⁷

Welt im Film represented typical propaganda, that process of “deliberately manipulated communication”⁸ described by Harold D. Lasswell as “the technique of

influencing human action by the manipulation of representations.”⁹ The newsreels were intended to (1) let the Germans know that they had been totally defeated, (2) instill a sense of guilt by presenting images of the atrocities committed by their country, (3) inflict punishment on the Germans for atrocities committed, and (4) offer a plan through which they might gain “the joys and beauties of the Democratic way of life.”¹⁰

Following the war, the remnants of the outlawed National Socialists Party of Germany, or the Nazis, in an effort to destroy the U.S.-Britain-Soviet alliance created by the Yalta agreements, attempted to instigate an East-West conflict.¹¹ The purpose of *Welt im Film* was, in part, to help quell those efforts. The Allies also were concerned at the time that many Germans might not accept the fact that their country had been defeated and might entertain the notion that they had control over their own destiny, so the Allied-produced newsreels hammered home the image of “an unconditional surrender” by “a beaten Germany,” and that the defeat of the country was “complete, final and absolute.”¹²

Those messages were accentuated by images of Allied victory parades and victorious American GIs hugging their sweethearts and wives. And while footage contained in Allied-produced newsreels shown in America was accompanied by cheerful, motivational music and narration, the same footage shown in Germany was presented with depressing music and “icy” narration.¹³

The intent of those newsreels and the overall mass media propaganda effort was not so much to humiliate the Germans, for that would accomplish little, but to prod them into seeing “the cost in human agony and physical destruction that their

aggression has cost the civilized world” and to offer them “the benefits of democracy.”¹⁴

The first issues of the newsreel series were prepared by Western specialists in psychological warfare working for Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF).¹⁵ Preparations for *Welt im Film* began in London before total victory by the Allies over Germany had actually been achieved. The series would be driven by two factors; the primacy of the formula “unconditional surrender,” and by the rivalry with *Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland* (NKFS), supported by the Soviet Union.¹⁶ *Welt im Film* represented a step-by-step effort of “re-education and reorientation of the German people after their defeat; their postwar thinking and their conduct were to comply with the ‘democratic way of life’.”¹⁷

The first few issues were compiled in London in mid-1945 before the entire operation moved in the fall of that year to Munich in the U.S. occupation zone.¹⁸ The newsreel, before the move to Munich, presented an extremely harsh interpretation of occupational policy, stressing German defeat and Allied supremacy, and actually showed the execution of German “spies and saboteurs.” By the 10th issue of the series, those execution scenes were dropped because of predictably negative audience reaction. Germans, filmmakers were informed, did not see the alleged crimes these spies had committed; they only saw Germans being shot. And from prisoner of war camps in Britain, Germans who saw the newsreels complained that “execution scenes (such as these) would not have been portrayed even in Nazi Germany.”¹⁹

Following initial issues, the emphasis was switched to the victims of war crimes and to the Nuremberg Trials. The quality of the newsreel also improved with the move

to Munich and with the acquisition of local staff to shoot footage previously shot by American service units. The major themes of defeat, retribution and postwar planning were supplemented with international stories, making *Welt im Film* content more like that of newsreels shown elsewhere in the world.²⁰ Most of the issues released during the period between the end of the war in Europe in early 1945 and the end of the war with Japan in the fall of that year dealt with American victories in the Pacific, as well as the atrocities committed by the Germans. These themes were intended to illustrate that not only had the Germany that committed those atrocities been defeated, but its allies were falling as well.²¹ In August of 1945, the producers of *Welt im Film* began using Germans to “teach” democracy to their own people.²² This was near the end of the period of “control propaganda” or “psychological warfare” by *Welt im Film*, designed to create and maintain order.²³

Major changes in the way material was presented also occurred in 1947 with increasing pressures of the Cold War. Prior to that time, the Soviet Union had been portrayed as an ally of the United States, but during 1947, efforts increased in *Welt im Film* to dissuade Germans from accepting communism and socialism and to persuade them to accept democracy and its benefits. By the time the Berlin Airlift was in full swing in June 1948, *Welt im Film* was full-blown propaganda from the Western side against the Soviet Union and Communism.²⁴

Availability of Source Material and Methodology

Much of the secondary resource material for this study has been listed in the section above with endnotes, and in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the Literature Review

section. Primary resource material is comprised of actual correspondence obtained from the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, near Washington, D.C., that was circulated among military and civilian officials involved in the production of *Welt im Film*. The National Archives material has been sorted chronologically and according to its direct application to the various *Welt im Film* eras and according to its relationship to overall Allied film policy for occupied Germany.

The primary methodology for this study is historical narration of the development of *Welt im Film* itself in the context of overall Allied film policy. It is also a historical analysis of the decision-making processes that went into the production of *Welt im Film*, based on correspondence and other documents available as primary resource material.

A total of 369 issues of *Welt im Film* were produced, with the first issue released 18 May 1945, and the last on 27 June 1952.²⁵ The collection up to 1950, when Britain withdrew from the program, is currently held by the Imperial War Museum in London. Roger Smither, Keeper of the Film for the museum, has published many guides to film holdings, including *The Battle of the Somme* and *Welt im Film, 1945-1950*. Copies of all but the first 10 issues are also available for viewing at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

The Imperial War Museum's Department of Film holds more than 60 million feet of film, with substantial holdings from the United States and from former enemy sources shot by various service units. Important documentaries, television compilations and feature films are also held by the museum, all of which are available for viewing by

those with legitimate research interests. Application must be made in writing to the Keeper of the Film, Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 2HZ.

A web site managed by the School of Conservation Sciences, Bournemouth University, UK, provides additional information on film and other features of the museum.²⁶

Endnotes

¹ National Archives (NA) Record Group (RG) 260. Gen. Robert A. McClure to Film, Theater and Music Control Branch, 16 May 1946.

² NA RG 260. Col. J.H. Hillis to Information Control Service 'Censoring of German Motion Picture Film,' 7 December 1945.

³ NA RG 260. Film Control Officer to Deputy Chief of division, 18 May 1946, and Joseph H. Westreich to Nicolas Nabokoff, 5 December 1945.

⁴ *Welt im Film* Issue No. 13, 10 August 1945.

⁵ *Welt im Film* Issue No. 82, 8 December 1946.

⁶ An assortment of *Welt im Film* segments from issues of June 1948 to May 1949 are used here.

⁷ Nicholas Pronay and Keith Wilson, eds, *The Political Re-Education of Germany & Her Allies After World War II*, (London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1985), 152.

⁸ Harold D. Lasswell, Daniel Lerner and Hans Speier, eds, "Introduction" in *Propaganda and Communications in World History*, Vol. 1 (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1979), 4.

⁹ Harold D. Lasswell, "Propaganda," in *The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Macmillian Co. and the Free Press, 1968), Vol. XII, 521.

¹⁰ Heinrich Bodensieck, "Welt im Film: Origins and Message" in *Hitler's Fall: The Newsreel Witness* (London, New York and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1988), 120.

¹¹ Bodensieck, 149.

¹² Bodensieck, 150.

¹³ Bodensieck, 150.

¹⁴ Bodensieck, 120.

¹⁵ Pronay and Wilson, *The Political Re-Education of Germany*, 151.

¹⁶ Bodensieck, "Welt im Film: Origins and Message," 119.

¹⁷ Bodensieck, 120.

¹⁸ Pronay and Wilson, *The Political Re-Education of Germany*, 151.

¹⁹ Pronay and Wilson, 152.

²⁰ Pronay and Wilson, 152-153.

²¹ Stephan Dolezel, "Welt im Film: 1945 and the Re-Education of Occupied Germany," in *Hitler's Fall: The Newsreel Witness* (London, New York and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1988), 148.

²² Bodensieck, "Welt im Film: Origins and Message," 152-53.

²³ Dolezel, "Welt im Film: 1945 and the Re-Education of Occupied Germany," 123.

²⁴ Roger Smither, "Introduction" in *Newsreels in Film Archives, a Survey Based on the FIAF Newsreel Symposium* (Wiltshire, England: Flick Books, 1996), 1.

²⁵ Pronay and Wilson, *The Political Re-Education of Germany*, 151.

²⁶ School of Conservation Sciences, Bournemouth University, UK, Imperial War Museum Department of Film, web site found at:
<http://chide.museum.org.uk/imperialwar/iwm.film.html>.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mass Communication

Wilbur Schramm, widely known as the founder of modern communication study, once said; “The difficulty in summing up a field like human communication is that it has no land that is exclusively its own. Communication is the fundamental social process.”¹ The literature is replete with information on the effects of various forms of communications, especially film, on society. Theories abound on the extend of influence the various communications media have on the individual and on society.²

Propaganda and Persuasion

Propaganda is described by Harold D. Lasswell as “the technique of influencing human action by the manipulation of representations.”³ In 1952, F.H. Lund presented the “Law of Primacy in Persuasion,” which basically states that the first information presented becomes primary, or the most lasting.⁴ Carl Hovland refers to “recommended opinion,” and describes the process by which a communicator can offer an opinion that acts as a stimulus for a listener to take steps in changing his or her own opinion.⁵ The psychological basis of opinion as it applies to attitudes toward Russia give a foundation for anti-Communist propaganda aimed at Germany following World War II.⁶

Propaganda is described as an essential element in warfare, dating to pre-Biblical times. It was, however, during World War I that sophisticated techniques of propaganda were utilized that eventually created negative attitudes in the 20th century toward both propaganda and the potential dangers of mass media influence.⁷

The word “propaganda” itself is often used for propaganda purposes.

Propaganda becomes what the enemy engages in, while one’s own propaganda parades under the disguise of “information and publicity.”⁸

During the waning months of World War II, Allied efforts to end the war by non-military means increased. The British War Cabinet Committee on Methods of Breaking the German Will to Resist was assigned the task of devising methods for speeding up the end of the war in Europe with propaganda and psychological warfare methods.⁹ After hostilities ended, the Allies set out immediately to “politically re-educate” the Germans with the use of radio and other media.¹⁰

After World War II, propaganda efforts by both sides of the Cold War increased dramatically, and became a major weapon in the ideological struggle between East and West. The actual effects of propaganda are in dispute, however. Studies of attitude change through communication have yielded varying results. Some studies suggest that there is no substantial change in opinions following communication, others show a shift of opinion toward the communication, and others show shifts in both directions, some toward and some away from the communication.¹¹

Film Propaganda

The value of propaganda in film was recognized from the outset. The idea of using film to shape ideas, to persuade people to think a certain way, came when pictures first moved.¹² But the defining moment in history for the development of film propaganda came just before and during World War I, when various countries produced propaganda films to gain popular support for their war efforts.¹³ The British government was successful in rallying its citizens against German aggression, while the

United States at first produced propaganda designed to persuade citizens to remain neutral and avoid war, then, when it became apparent that entry into the war was unavoidable, switched to a “war mode” in an effort to rally citizens behind a war effort.¹⁴

George Creel, chief of the U.S. Committee on Public Information, a World War I agency, was assigned to produce material designed to convince Americans that the country’s involvement in the war was necessary. He describes the function of the Committee on Public Information this way:

... It was of the greatest importance that America in this war should be represented not merely as a strong man fully armed, but as a strong man fully armed and believing in the cause for which he was fighting. It was necessary to have somebody who understood why we were at war, and in saying that I speak not of a man who could comprehend merely the difficult international problems with regard to it, but the spirit that made us go into this war, and the things we were fighting for. Wars are sometimes fought for land, sometimes for dynastic aspiration, and sometimes for ideas and ideals. We were fighting for ideas and ideals, and somebody who realized that, and knew it, had to say it and keep on saying it until it was believed. That was a part of the function of the Committee on Public Information.¹⁵

As the war in Europe continued, films produced in the United States became more and more critical of the Germans. Feature movies with war-related narratives included Hate-the-Hun propaganda, exemplified by titles such as *The Kaiser*, *The Beast of Berlin*, and *The Prussian Cur*.¹⁶

Creel’s work greatly influenced the *Why We Fight* series of films produced for the World War II effort. The series is considered by many to be the most influential and persuasive effort in modern times in rallying citizens to a cause.¹⁷ Frank Capra, creator of the series, quotes General George C. Marshall; “To win this war we must win the

battle for men's minds."¹⁸ Capra's prewar portrayals of the American hero made him the ideal choice for producing the series.¹⁹

Propaganda approaches during war have varied from country to country. The differences, for example, between British methods and German methods are spelled out by Michael Balfour.²⁰ Balfour notes that the British gave priority to individual freedom and rights, while the Germans emphasized discipline and order.

Though resembling one another in certain outward respects, and in particular as regards to trappings of industrialization, they (Germany and England) had developed under different pressures and at different speeds. The result was a fundamental difference of outlook between the 'Mother Country' and 'Fatherland', between the country which had pioneered the 'Bourgeois' and 'Industrial' revolution, where 'modernisation' (sic) was largely imposed from above by a 'paternal' government.²¹

Comparisons between the film propaganda methods used by the United States and Japan prior to and during World War II are provided in a series of essays in *The Japan America Film Wars: WWII Propaganda and Its Cultural Contexts*²² Methods used by Joseph Goebbels for film propaganda for the Nazis in World War II produced remarkable successes in swaying public opinion. Goebbels believed that the rank and file "are more primitive than we imagine," and propaganda must therefore "always be essentially simple and repetitive."²³ Some have come to the conclusion that the Allies used many of the same devices used by the Nazis in their own documentary films on the war.²⁴ The British effort in garnering public support for the war was produced by the Crown Film Unit,²⁵ and conformed to the true traditions of the *Why We Fight* series produced by Capra.

The True Glory, the last great combat documentary made during the second world war, is considered a grand success in an artistic sense, but a failure in terms of its initial goal of showing unity in Allied operations.²⁶ British and American filmmakers who were part of the Joint Anglo-American Film Planning Committee, producers of the film, found themselves at odds over production techniques, and consequently, presented the image of Allied disunity.²⁷

Following World War II, the information policy of the American military government in Germany undoubtedly played an important role in providing consensus-building information and interpretation by the shaping of stories related to Germany in the nation's newspapers, magazines, radio broadcasts and newsreels.²⁸

Newsreel Beginnings

Before television, the largest group of consumers of visual media were movie-goers. Prior to 1952, before television had gained its widespread "non-elite" audience, some 64 million Americans received a dose of "feel good" patriotism each week in the form of a newsreel.²⁹

The first film ever, made in 1895 by the Lumiere brothers of France, was *La sortie des usines Lumiere, a Lyon-Montplaisir* (workmen leaving the Lumiere factory at Lyon-Montplaisir), and was a newsreel in a very real way. It was followed by others, all a short view of real life situations.³⁰

From these beginnings, the step to filming official visits, catastrophes and other events was a short one. By 1896, the Lumiere brothers engaged Felix Mesguich, who was to become the world's first film reporter. Mesguich began traveling all over Europe and other parts of the world filming various events and catastrophes.³¹

The Marshall Plan

Most historians view the Marshall Plan as a critical step toward reviving the economies of Europe following World War II. The Marshall Plan was designed to overcome the economic bottlenecks and make available the short supplies that the European community needed from the United States.³²

The economic foundations laid by the plan were intended, in part, to provide a Western defense against Soviet pressure.³³ The unity of Western Europe that resulted from the Marshall Plan is manifested today in the Common Market, NATO, and other institutions.³⁴

The Marshall Plan was initiated by then Secretary of State George C. Marshall in June 1947,³⁵ however, the primary architect and chief negotiator of the plan was William L. Clayton, at that time the State Department's under secretary for economic affairs.³⁶ Before Marshall announced his plan to the Harvard graduating class in June 1947, Clayton had already laid the foundation for the plan by successfully negotiating the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), a massive and unprecedented undertaking.³⁷

The Marshall Plan Film Policy

Although the *Welt im Film* series began more than a year before the Marshall Plan was announced, the overall Allied film effort became a big part of the plan.³⁸ Albert E. Hemsing supervised production of more than 100 documentary films that were produced by the Marshall Plan's European Film Unit in Paris during the early 1950s. Hemsing was the United States Information Agency's Public Affairs Officer in Berlin when the Berlin Wall was constructed in August 1961, and made headlines when

he and U.S. Minister Allan Lightner drove a Volkswagen, with a U.S. Military escort, past Check Point Charlie and the East German border police without submitting their passports.³⁹ The action was intended to reaffirm the rights of American officials to enter East Berlin without recognizing East German authority.⁴⁰

Allied film policy toward Germany during the postwar period is reflected in numerous correspondences between military and civilian personnel involved in the various film efforts aimed at re-educating Germans.⁴¹ Those efforts included the structuring of *Welt im Film* itself and the acceptance or rejection of various American-made films destined for German theaters.⁴²

Post-War Newsreels in East Germany

Der Augenzeuge (The Eyewitness) began operations in East Germany in February 1946, about the time *Welt im Film* was moving into its second phase of operations as described in Chapter 1. But the series, produced by the Germans themselves, initially did not present rigid Soviet ideological framework as one would envision, and instead had kind words for all. The series initially presented images of internal Soviet affairs endorsing joint Allied occupation of Berlin, Allied sport competitions, and actually depicted Allied women extolling the virtues of democracy and praising Montgomery, Eisenhower and Mrs. Roosevelt.⁴³ Coverage stressing the virtue of portraying differing points of view changed, however, in the fall of 1948, when *Der Augenzeuge* and *Nationalkomitee Freies Deutschland* (NKFS), a newsreels series produced by the Soviets, became full-blown propaganda tools for Communism.⁴⁴

Welt im Film

Welt im Film, the American and British produced newsreel series for showing to postwar German movie-goers, was at first intended to emphasize defeat and guilt themes and democratic idealism. But they were designed to punish, as well, so the German people were presented with harsh images of German wartime failures and of Germans being executed without explanation.⁴⁵

The newsreels were intended to let the Germans know they had been totally defeated, to instill a sense of guilt in them, to inflict punishment, and to offer a plan to gain "the joys and beauties of the Democratic way of life."⁴⁶ The first few issues of *Welt im Film* were compiled in London in mid-1945 before the entire operation moved in the fall of that year to Munich in the U.S. occupation zone of Germany. After the move to Munich, execution scenes were eliminated from the series, and the major themes of defeat, retribution and postwar planning were supplemented with international stories, making *Welt im Film* content more like that of newsreels shown elsewhere in the world at the time.⁴⁷

Major changes in the way material was presented also occurred in 1947 with increasing pressures of the Cold War. Prior to that time, the Soviet Union had been portrayed as an ally of the United States, but during 1947, efforts increased in *Welt im Film* to dissuade Germans from accepting Communism and socialism and to persuade them to accept democracy and its benefits.⁴⁸ By the time the Berlin Airlift was in full swing in 1948, the series had become full-blown propaganda from the Western side against the Soviet Union and Communism.⁴⁹

The evolution of *Welt im Film* into an anti-Communist propaganda weapon paralleled the evolution of other media controlled by the United States. By 1948, for example, the Voice of America, which had become the official global broadcasting service of the United States in 1942, became distinctly anti-Communist in nature as the perceived threat of the Soviet Union loomed in Eastern Europe.⁵⁰

Endnotes

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CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY and MATERIALS

The primary methodology used in this thesis is historical analysis of correspondence that circulated among military and civilian officials involved in setting policy for the *Welt im Film* newsreel series during the three eras under study. Other documents, such as film policy guidelines, were used for analysis as well. Historical narration is used to a degree to tell the story of *Welt im Film* within a historical context.

Robert Jones Shafer has provided the framework for the methodology used in this thesis in his *A Guide to Historical Method*.¹ Shafer makes a distinction between historical narrative and historical analysis, the two primary methods used in this thesis:

Humanity's fascination with its past is illustrated by the great variety of historical literature. The most useful distinction is between narrative and analysis, although the two frequently are combined. Narrative is story, often with description as a simple sort of near-analysis, but sometimes with a great deal of profound analysis. Analysis is examination of topics, groups of events or ideas, with only incidental attention to individual occurrences.²

Shafer notes that analysis rather than narrative is characteristic of the bulk of scholarly production,³ and that this could be because fewer people are capable of writing brilliant narrative history than of turning out scholarly monographs.⁴ Narrative at its extreme, Shafer says, contains little analysis, and analysis at its extreme has little narrative. Analysis requires "meticulous research into source materials or evidence,"⁵ whereas narration pays attention "to story, to great events and human interest, and to individual heroism and depravity...."⁶ The usual vehicle for analysis is the monograph,

which was refined by “scientific” historians of the 19th century into approximately its present form.⁷

It (monographic study) is ... a child of science rather than of humanism. Although influenced by the humanist tradition, it holds to the dictum that accuracy is more important than art. It is obvious that monographic studies often fail to integrate results into the broader framework of history; also, most are dull. Some monographic history, nevertheless, is well written, even lively, and some carefully integrates the analysis into history in general.⁸

Historical Method Applied to *Welt im Film* Issues and Documents

The historical analysis and narrative methods are used in this thesis to tell the story of *Welt im Film* and of events and significant developments leading up to its production. Descriptions of film efforts that preceded the series are part of this story, as are the actual production, the philosophies that guided the production, and the reactions to the production. This narrative method is combined analysis as described by Shafer.

Narrative Method

The narrative method is used in this thesis to ensure readability among non-historians in an effort to increase the reading audience and to provide what Shafer referred to as “a communication link between the scholar and the public.”⁹ *Welt im Film* is presented herein as a story of psychological warfare, of re-education, and of anti-communist propaganda. It is presented in the context of historical development of film and, specifically, of documentary film and newsreels. It is a story that began when pictures first moved in the 1880s, and one that continues through the devastation and rebuilding of the 1940s and into the early 1950s.

Historical Method: Science or Humanity?

The approach to *Welt im Film* in this thesis is to treat history more as a humanity than as a science. A purely scientific approach cannot adequately deal with the functions of people, because intellectual and spiritual forces cannot be subjected to any analysis that can properly be called scientific. Personal philosophies and values of the author of this thesis tended to be a motivational factor in its development. Personal attitudes toward Hitler and the Third Reich, in propaganda in general and toward attempts to mold people's attitudes, in film and its influence on audiences, and of censorship and restriction of material, all played a role in the development of this thesis.

Continuity of History

The idea of continuity of history and of presenting *Welt im Film* in historical perspective also played a role in development of this thesis. The story of *Welt im Film* could not have been told without presenting the story of film documentaries that preceded the series and without inclusion of prevailing philosophies among Allied officials, both those involved in film policy and those involved in general policy toward occupied Germany.

Research Questions and Causation: The "Why?"

The basic research questions as described in the Introduction section of this thesis are: What was the extent of the Allied propaganda and censorship policy in the newsreel series *Welt im Film* in the various eras in the context of overall film policy toward postwar Germany? How was that policy carried out?

Causation, or why *Welt im Film* occurred in its various forms, is also part of the story. What caused *Welt im Film* to take on the psychological warfare form of the early days, and then to evolve into an era of re-education and information, and then to eventually evolve into a full-blown anti-communist propaganda medium for the British and the United States? And why were the various prevailing themes important to those producing the series? What was the purpose of emphasizing these themes in the context of overall Allied policy? This thesis attempts to answer these questions while telling the story of *Welt im Film*.

Elements of Method

Following Shafer's model, this thesis was developed on certain elements of method. The first, deciding on categories of evidence, was used in the chronological classification of documents pertaining to the various eras under study, as well as sorting in terms of prevailing themes and various philosophies driving the production of *Welt im Film*. The second, collection of evidence, was accomplished through two means; primary collection of documents and of actual *Welt im Film* samples at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, and collection of secondary source material as listed in the Review of the Literature section of this thesis. Much of the material used for this thesis, therefore, is that which was produced by actual witnesses and participants of the events described, along with the accounts of historians living or writing after the events had occurred.

Analysis of *Welt im Film* And *Welt im Film* Documents

The major source of materials for analysis was documents related to *Welt im Film*, which consisted of correspondences between military film officials and guidelines developed by the various officials and committees. These correspondences and documents were obtained from the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Sample issues of *Welt im Film*, also obtained from the National Archives in College Park, were also used for analysis.

When a researcher makes a note on the copy of a document he or she has obtained, that note represents a degree of analysis. The note may simply say "relates to timeliness," or "Psychological Warfare era." If the note goes beyond mere copying of the document, even to the slightest degree, then it becomes analysis.²⁴ This author first divided material related to *Welt im Film* into several categories according to time period and according to the various issues and elements to be explored within those time periods. The three time periods of *Welt im Film* are: (1) Psychological Warfare, May-August 1945; (2) Informational, August 1945 to July 1946; and (3) Anti-Communist Propaganda, July 1947 to June 1952. The first chore for this author was to divide the material chronologically so that each document (film guidelines, letters, etc.) fit into one of the eras listed above. Within the actual time periods, certain themes dominated, and documents were further divided according to those themes.

Analysis of Prevailing Themes Within Each Era

Analysis consisted of investigation of overall film policy during the various eras of *Welt im Film*, along with film policy specifically designed for the series. In addition,

specific application of film policy as it related to actual themes within each era was probed.

For example, in the "Psychological Warfare" era of the series, it became clear that prevailing themes were guilt and punishment, the destruction the war had caused, the defeat of Germany's allies, and the victorious Allies returning home. An analysis of issue No. 13, which was near the end of the era, and related documents illustrates these themes.

Issue No. 82, released near the end of 1946 as an overview of that year, along with related documents, was used for analysis of the "Informational" era of *Welt im Film*. Prevailing themes during this era, as indicated by issue No. 82 and related documents, included food and clothing distribution as "goodwill" efforts, economic recovery of Germany, examples of democracy at work, Allied unity, and reconstruction of the devastated country. Noticeably absent from this era are references in *Welt im Film* and in correspondence and policy documents to alleged failures of the Soviet Union and Communism in these areas.

Finally, *Welt im Film* issues of mid-1947 and beyond, during the Berlin Airlift and the *Welt im Film* era of "Anti-Communist Propaganda" of the series, along with related documents that pertain to driving policy and philosophy, are also examined and analyzed. Generally during this era, film policy officials maintained major Allied success themes of the previous era, but incorporated the added ingredient of failures of the Communist in their own redevelopment efforts.

Endnotes

¹ Robert Jones Shafer, ed., *A Guide to Historical Method, Third Edition* (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1980), throughout.

² Shafer, 11.

³ Shafer, 13

⁴ Shafer, 12

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⁶ Shafer, 12

⁷ Shafer, 13

⁸ Shafer, 14

⁹ Shafer, 12

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

To fully appreciate the philosophical motivation of those responsible for *Welt im Film* content and production during the various periods under study, it is necessary to review the history of documentaries, especially those related to war, and to consider overall U.S. film policy toward Germany during the postwar period. Persuasion techniques developed during World War I by such people as George Creel likely had a influence on later persuasion efforts such as Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* series of World War II, which in turn, had an indirect impact on such projects as *Welt im Film*. And although the primary intent of rigorous World War II film policy was to prohibit the showing of feature films deemed undesirable by the occupational forces, the policy greatly influenced the content of documentaries and newsreels as well.

Welt im Film conformed to overall film policy by following strict guidelines established by various committees and officials. Only material approved at the highest level of Information Control, U.S. Army, was incorporated into the series. Censorship and film review procedures were spelled out in detail by military film authorities, and each film, whether feature, documentary or newsreel, was required to go through an elaborate process before it could be released to the movie theaters.¹

The first issue of *Welt im Film* was released on 18 May 1945, just ten days after the end of hostilities. More than 200 weekly issues followed before the ending of its compulsory status at the creation of the Bundesrepublik in September 1949. The

newsreel continued under joint Anglo-American operation until 1 June 1950, when the British withdrew from the program, and under the operation of the Americans alone until 27 June 1952, when production ceased altogether with issue 369.²

In the first era of *Welt im Film*, from May 1945 to August 1945, major themes were guilt and punishment, which included images of Germans being executed and also of the devastation of Germany as a result of the war. These early issues, developed by the Psychological Warfare Division of Supreme European Allied Command, extolled the virtues of democracy only to a limited degree, for it is clear that those in charge of *Welt im Film* were most interested in continuing to wage psychological warfare against the German people as they had done before the war had ended.³

Sometime in August 1945, it became apparent to military film policy makers that waging psychological warfare against the Germans was of little value,⁴ since the United States was no longer at war with Germany. Because the Psychological Warfare Division had been in charge of waging such war against the Germans during actual hostilities, their duties had simply carried over into the postwar period if only for a few months.

Major themes from top officials during the second era of *Welt im Film*, after control of the series had been transferred from the Psychological Warfare Division to the Information Services Control sections of the Office of Military Government, emphasized the various elements according to the prevailing philosophy. Food distribution, economic development, normalization of German life, the virtues of democracy, the unity of the Allies, and some degree of punishment were all elements of *Welt im Film*.

By mid-1947, when *Welt im Film* officials realized that newsreels and documentaries being produced by the Russians for showing in East Germany were becoming Communist propaganda endeavors, emphasis for the *Welt im Film* series shifted to anti-Communist propaganda, and newsreels and documentaries on both sides of the Iron Curtain served as propaganda tools for their respective sides for the remainder of the decade and into the 1950s. This era, from mid-1947 to 1952, the “Anti-Communist Propaganda” period, is the third era of *Welt im Film* under study.

Early Film Efforts

Although the value of propaganda in film was recognized when pictures first moved, the defining moment in history for the development of film propaganda came just before and during World War I, when various countries produced propaganda films to gain popular support for their war efforts.⁵ It was the cinema's ability to reach mass audiences that made it attractive to various officials in the battle for the hearts and minds of ordinary people.⁶

But the results of film propaganda efforts during World War I are uncertain. Despite this uncertainty, there emerged in the years to follow a belief among communicators that film had an enormous power as a propaganda tool. This belief gave rise to the “magic bullet” and “hypodermic needle” communication theories, which not only attested to the belief of the power of film as propaganda, but also created an image of a receiving public that was more or less powerless to deflect the messages sent to them or to discern between what was true and what was not.⁷

During the years between World War I and World War II, propagandists were motivated by these beliefs. By the time hostilities had broken out at the beginning of

World War II, film propaganda had become an art form, and British, American, German and Russian efforts began to make an indelible mark on film history and on society as a whole.⁸

Early U.S. Efforts

When war broke out in Europe in 1914, the population of the United States was split on whether the country should remain out of the conflict at all costs or prepare for entrance into the war which many said was inevitable.⁹ At first, many feature films were aimed at convincing the population that the nation should remain neutral and avoid war, but when it became apparent in early-1917 that entry into the war was unavoidable, an effort was initiated to reduce pacifist feelings.¹⁰ George Creel, chief of the Committee on Public Information (the official U.S. agency for domestic propaganda) began using motion pictures as part of an all-out campaign to sell the war to the American public.¹¹ After the war was over, Creel presented a principle that would guide future programs aimed at gaining public support for war efforts. In his book *How We Advertised America*, written shortly after the end of the war, Creel said:

... The war was not fought in France alone. Back of the firing-line, back of armies and navies, back of the great supply-depots, another struggle waged with the same intensity and with almost equal significance attaching to its victories and defeats. It was the fight for the *minds* (Creel's own italics) of men, for the "conquest of their convictions," and the battle-line ran through every home in every country.¹²

Later, in 1933, Harold Lasswell, the renowned communicator, would reiterate Creel's theme, and it would become the guiding light for all U.S. war persuasion endeavors. Lasswell said, "No government could hope to win without a united nation

behind it, and no government could have a united nation behind it unless it controlled the minds of the people....”¹³

Early British Efforts

The British government launched an intensive film propaganda effort at the end of 1915 with the release of *Britain Prepared*, which was designed to demonstrate to the British people the country’s preparedness for war.¹⁴ The release of *Britain Prepared* was followed by some 27 short films depicting non-combat wartime efforts at the front.¹⁵ Technical limitations and scrutiny by British intelligence officers generally excluded actual combat footage in these films.

That changed with the release of *The Battle of the Somme* in August 1916. The film’s actual battle scenes depicted wounded and dead British soldiers.¹⁶ Well received by the British public, the film was considered a success in both a business sense and a patriotic-rallying sense. The film, 77 minutes in length, is not considered by many as a true propaganda effort, since it presented actual images of the British Fourth Army north of the River Somme in the days immediately before, during and after the start of the Somme offensive in a completely factual manner.¹⁷

The high point of wartime official film propaganda for the British came during a period between October 1916 and January 1917. In October 1916, the British released the film *The King Visits His Armies in the Great Advance*, and in January 1917, *The Battle of the Ancre and the Advance of the Tanks* was released.¹⁸ Thus ended the first full year of British propaganda film production, an effort that was seen as a complete success at the time.

But questions remain as to how successful these films were in persuading people to support the war effort. The films were produced in a favorable climate, and audiences may have been receptive to their message simply because they were already in agreement with the war effort. It is likely that the official films played very little, if any, part in persuading the British public to support the war, and in this particular case, it would appear that the power of film propaganda was more mythical than real.¹⁹

Early Russian Efforts

In Russian, film propaganda also came of age during the period of World War I, which coincided with the Russian Revolution of 1917. The first effort by Russian authorities to use the cinema for propaganda purposes came in March 1914, when the Skobelev Committee, which had been established earlier to assist veterans of the Russo-Japanese War, set up the Military Film Section. The agency was given the exclusive right to film at the front when war broke out in August of that year, but that right was revoked when commercial press agencies complained about the quality and scarcity of its films.²⁰ Although this represented a delay in the development of a government monopoly of film, by 1916, efforts were under way to establish a government film monopoly. The Russian Revolution of 1917, however, halted these efforts, and despite its enormous potential, the cinema remained unharnessed by the Provisional Government.²¹

The Skobelev Committee was reorganized on several occasions, and in June 1917, began producing a propaganda newsreel called *Free Russia*. The Provisional Government had already abolished censorship simply to relieve itself of an unnecessary administrative burden. The result was an increase in commercial films about the fallen

imperial family. And although steps were being taken immediately after the October Revolution in 1917 to secure control of information, it would be several years before governmental film propaganda and censorship fully blossomed in Russia.²²

Following the revolution, Russian leaders set up the Department of Agitation and Propaganda in Moscow, which took complete control of all information media. Within a short time, all forms of printing -- books, newspapers, pamphlets, and posters -- were controlled by the State Publicity Corporation.²³ The Main Political Education Committee of the Republic was established in 1920, and immediately took on the task of educating the masses through radio and the cinema. The Communists then began to develop documentary films with strong elements of persuasion.²⁴

Early German Efforts

The origins and development of German film up to the First World War, which broke out in 1914, reflect a pattern similar to most European countries.²⁵ The First World War put the German cinema on its feet. But propaganda efforts by the Germans during the war never matched British efforts, and many Germans, including Adolf Hitler himself, later attributed the loss of the war to superior propaganda techniques of the British.²⁶ Hitler was so impressed with what he called the "genius" of British propaganda that he paid tribute to the British effort in his book *Mein Kampf*.²⁷

Propaganda efforts by the Germans prior to the war were amateurish, at best, and lacked both organization and moral drive.²⁸ During the early months of the war, films with patriotic themes prevailed and were well received by German audiences, but as the German advance was slowed by opposing forces, exhilaration began to evaporate, and Germans began seeking an escape from the realities of the war. The result was a

shift away from movies with patriotic themes to movies produced for pure escapist entertainment value.²⁹

During the war, all films shown in Germany were subjected to censorship by the military. In July 1915, the government prohibited the export of films in an effort save materials, and in February 1916, it banned imports to save foreign currency and to prevent the infiltration of enemy propaganda. Finally, in January 1917, it began censorship of films for export to Allied and neutral countries in an effort to control the image of Germany outside its borders.³⁰

In December 1917, the *Universum-Film-Aktiengesellschaft*, or *Ufa*, was formed. *Ufa* came too late to act as an effective wartime propaganda agency, but it eventually exerted a fundamental influence on the subsequent development of the German cinema in the period following the war.³¹ In 1918, during the chaotic days following the war, artistic expression in film and in other media became fragmented, and few clear patterns emerged.³²

In 1919, *Das Cabinet Des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*) was released, and immediately became a sensation.³³ The film would eventually epitomize the period by presenting images of “insane” and “unlimited authority” against the common man, with reason ultimately overpowering unreasonable power. The film reflected a double aspect of German life, coupling a reality in which Caligari’s authority triumphs with a hallucination in which the same authority is overthrown.³⁴

German films in the 1920s, during the early years of the Weimar Republic, are distinguished by an apparent obsession with the nature and exercise of power. Most of them seemed preoccupied with the grotesque, the tortured and the abnormal. Films of

the era can be roughly divided into two categories; those that were not directly political and those that were openly political. Those that were political in nature dealt with such themes as the restoration of the monarchy (*Fridericus Rex*, for example).³⁵

One of the last films made during the Weimar Republic era was *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*, which allowed the film director, Fritz Lang, the opportunity to interject veiled comments on Nazism. In a program note on the film's American premiere, Lang wrote:

This film was made as an allegory to show Hitler's processes of terrorism. Slogans and doctrines of the Third Reich have been put into the mouths of criminals in the film. Thus I hoped to expose the masked Nazi theory of the necessity to deliberately destroy everything which is precious to a people ... Then, when everything collapsed and they were thrown into utter despair, they would try to find help in the 'new order.'

³⁶

During the 1930s, Nazi propaganda began to dominate the German cinema. Perhaps the most striking example of Nazi propaganda in film is *Triumph of the Will*, directed by Leni Riefenstahl. The movie portrays a huge Nazi Party rally in Nuremberg in 1934, and although not considered a typical Nazi propaganda film, it is considered a masterpiece of film propaganda.³⁷

In viewing the film, it is easy to understand the profound impact it would later have on American film maker Frank Capra when he began work on the *Why We Fight* series of World War II. (See U.S. Film Policy During 1942-45 below). The film captured the essence of the Nazi movement, and adequately projected the awesome power that was about to be unleashed upon the world. In 1935, Riefenstahl published a booklet entitled *Hinter den Kulissen des Reichsparteitag-Films*, or *Behind the Scenes of*

the Reich Party Rally Film, in which she praises Hitler for his insight into the importance of film.

The Fuhrer has recognized the importance of film. Where else in the world has the opportunity for developing the film in its abundance of expression into the interpreter of an event been so perspicaciously recognized? Once again Adolf Hitler has given an unprecedented example ... In the world we have seen documentary films; governments have had them made and parties have ordered campaign films. *The belief that a real and strong experience of a nation can find new experience in the film was born in Germany.* In this way the Fuhrer has given the contemporary film both its sense and mission.³⁸

In the film, Rudolf Hess, number two in command in Hitler's Germany, speaks to the masses gathered to show homage to the Fuhrer. Hess touches upon most of the themes that are central to the overall message of the film, those of leadership, loyalty, unity, strength and Germanness.

My Fuhrer, around you are gathered the flags and banners of this National Socialism. Only when their cloth has worn thin will people, looking back, be able to understand fully the greatness of our time and conceive what you, my Fuhrer, mean for Germany. You are Germany. When you act, the nation acts. When you judge, the people judge. Our gratitude is our pledge to stand by you for better or for worse, come what may! Thanks to your leadership, Germany will achieve her goal of being a homeland, a homeland for all the Germans in the world. You were our guarantee of victory: You are now our guarantee of peace. Heil Hitler! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!³⁹

Triumph of the Will almost presents Hitler as a deity -- a man larger than life, a man who is portrayed as Germany itself, who does not offer hope, but is hope itself. And as we shall see, the film is destined to have a profound impact on film making for decades to come.

Newsreels in General

Before television, the largest group of consumers of visual media were movie-goers. Prior to 1952, before television had gained its widespread “non-elite” audience, some 64 million Americans received a dose of “feel good” patriotism each week in the form of a newsreel.⁴⁰ In 1952, during the heyday of newsreels, the major companies producing newsreels in the United States were *Paramount News*, *Fox Movietone News*, *Warner-Pathe News*, *Universal News*, and *News of the Day* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer-Hearst). British companies, many of which were subsidiaries of American companies, included *British Movietone News*, *British Paramount News*, *Pathe News*, *Gaumont British News*, and *Universal News*.⁴¹

The first film ever, made in 1895 by the Lumiere brothers of France, was *La sortie des usines Lumiere, a Lyon-Montplaisir* (workmen leaving the Lumiere factory at Lyon-Montplaisir), was a newsreel in a very real way. It was followed by others, all a short view of real life situations.⁴²

From these beginnings, the step to filming official visits, catastrophes and other events was a short one. By 1896, the Lumiere brothers engaged Felix Mesguich, who was to become the world’s first film reporter. Mesguich began traveling all over Europe and other parts of the world filming various events and catastrophes.⁴³

Film reporting as initiated by the Lumiere brothers and carried out by Mesguich appeared at about the same time as photographic press reporting. In 1907 in Germany, the *Deutsche Warte* published the first photograph ever to appear in a daily newspaper. But some years earlier, in 1892, the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, not officially

considered a newspaper, published a photographic report on the Bromberg railway accident.⁴⁴

The modern newsreel was born in 1905 in the United States, and around 1907 in France, and followed the establishment of permanent halls for film showing. The creation of these halls meant that most of those viewing movies were the same people over and over again, necessitating the need to change newsreel material frequently.⁴⁵

World War I, the period from 1914 to 1918, gave the newsreels a chance to assert themselves and to produce footage of some of the great happenings in the world.⁴⁶ During this period, the American films finally moved ahead of others in quality and became the production leaders, a position they held throughout the remaining history of the newsreels. With a few exceptions around the world, newsreels became a thing of the past when television took over in the early 1950s as the primary medium for the mass audiences of the time.⁴⁷

U.S. Film Policy During 1942-45

Policy established during the early years of World War II would continue to influence production and distribution of all film for German consumption after the war and throughout the decade. In 1942, Frank Capra, an Academy Award winning film director of the time, was charged with producing films designed to inform the public and to encourage participation in the war effort.⁴⁸ The endeavor was destined to be in the true spirit of the “winning the hearts and minds of men” concept established by Creel some two decades before.⁴⁹

The *Why We Fight* Series

Like most major film propaganda efforts, the campaign by the United States had become very sophisticated by the time World War II began. Capra was inducted into the Army in June 1942 and was immediately made chief of the Film Production Section of Special Services for the purpose of producing the *Why We Fight* series.⁵⁰ Chief of Staff Gen. George C. Marshall had ordered the induction and placement of Capra after the general found that lectures presented to newly inducted servicemen lacked in effectiveness. Shortly after Capra's induction, Marshall and Capra met, and Capra promised to make him "the best damned documentary films ever made."⁵¹

Within a few weeks of that promise, the filmmaker viewed Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, which Capra saw as "an ominous prelude of Hitler's holocaust of hate," made in such a way that "Satan couldn't have devised a more blood-chilling super-spectacle."⁵²

Driven by the enormity of the project and the impression that *Triumph of the Will* had had on him, Capra immediately began work, and between 1942 and 1945, produced a series of seven films, *Prelude to War*, *The Nazis Strike*, *Divide and Conquer*, *The Battle of Britain*, *The Battle of Russia*, *The Battle of China* and *War Comes to America*.⁵³

Two basic assumptions appeared to underlie the preparation of the films. The first was that a sizable segment of the draftee population lacked knowledge of the national and international events leading up to America's entrance into the war, and the second was that a knowledge of those events would in some way lead men to accept induction into the Army more willingly.⁵⁴

Marshall opened the first film of the series, *Prelude to War*, first shown to troops on 30 October 1942, with the following summary of the objectives for the new series:

This film, the first of a series, has been prepared by the War Department to acquaint members of the Army with factual information as to the causes, the events leading up to our entry into the war, and to the principles for which we are fighting. A knowledge of these facts is an indispensable part of military training and merits the thoughtful consideration of every American soldier.⁵⁵

The films won critical acclaim, and *Prelude to War* received an Academy Award for best documentary film of 1942.⁵⁶ Some, however, criticized the film for “overgeneralization,” and others spoke of *Prelude to War* references to “Mr. John Q. Public” as a betrayal of an “underestimation of the audience.”⁵⁷

Subsequent research has shown that the series actually changed few opinions and attitudes, however. The films appear to have had no effect on men’s general motivation to serve as soldiers, which had at the outset been the ultimate objective of the orientation program.⁵⁸

The True Glory

The True Glory,⁵⁹ which won its own Oscar for the best documentary of 1945,⁶⁰ was the last great combat documentary of World War II. The film was introduced by Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, and told the story of the last year of the war in Europe, beginning with the Normandy invasion and ending with the fall of Berlin.⁶¹ The film was considered a success in an artistic and popular sense, but a failure in terms of its original purposes.

The first attempt at making a joint Anglo-American film took place in 1943-44, when Capra was sent to London to co-produce a joint-effort documentary on the North African campaign by the Allies. But what was supposed to be a cooperative effort developed into a major crisis in inter-Allied propaganda between Capra and the British Army Film Unit because of difference in personality and film-making techniques. A positive reception of the film *Tunisian Victory*, released in early 1944, in no way calmed tensions that had built up between U.S. and British film makers.⁶²

In response to these tensions, Allied officials established the Joint Anglo-American Film Planning Committee (JAAFPC) in March 1944 for the purpose of cinematic coverage of the coming invasion of France. Joint planning between the United States and Britain was to be driven by two important goals -- to present the appearance of Allied unity to the world and to boost soldier moral. But JAAFPC also became bogged down in inter-service and inter-Allied rivalry that symbolized much of Anglo-American relations during the last year and a half of the war.⁶³ As a result, neither of these major goals were achieved. The world saw disunity rather than unity between the Allies, and separate efforts by Britain tended to emphasize its role in the war over the role of other Allied nations.⁶⁴

Robert Riskin, Chief of the Overseas Branch of the Office of War Information's Motion Picture Bureau, emphasizing the effect of this rift on the morale of the American soldier, said on 31 March 1944 in a letter to Gen. Robert A. McClure, chief of Publicity and Political Warfare, SHAEF, that an American soldier serving in the United Kingdom, "seeing a newsreel in which the British are winning the war single-handedly, is ready to start a brawl with every English soldier he meets."⁶⁵

The True Glory was released to audiences in Britain and the United States in August 1945 and received critical acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic.⁶⁶ But if the film was a success in artistic terms, it was a failure in others. It failed to achieve the primary goals that were established when JAAFPC was first formed: to show unity between Allied nations and to provide a morale boost to soldiers fighting the Germans.⁶⁷

The rift between British and American producers during the making of *The True Glory* was never fully mended, and it would later influence decisions surrounding the production of the *Welt im Film* newsreel series. Efforts to initiate a newsreel produced jointly by the four powers that occupied Germany following World War II would fail, partly because of that rift and the mistrust that had developed between British and American film makers. However, a larger, much more significant rift between the occupying forces of the West and the Soviet Union would have a much greater impact on *Welt im Film* and the direction it would take.

Psychological warfare techniques used during the last year of the Third Reich were aimed at convincing the Germans that Germany had already lost the war and that continuing to wage war with the Allies would be national suicide. Efforts were also made via Voice of America radio broadcasts and leaflet drops on Germany to discredit Nazi leadership and to break down the German habit of obedience to the Nazis. The techniques used during actual hostilities were later used in postwar film efforts, including *Welt im Film*.⁶⁸

U.S. Film Policy After World War II

Shortly after the cessation of hostilities in Europe, the Allied occupation forces began exerting total control over the operations of movie theaters in Germany and the material that would be presented in those theaters. Licenses were issued for operation, and any theater that strayed even slightly from the strict rules established by the military command would face stern warnings and even closure.

In January 1946, for example, the Information Control Division of the U.S. Army admonished the mayor of Plattling, Lower Bavaria for instructing the manager of a local theater to allow only those over 18 into the theater. The mayor was warned that a "report to headquarters" would be forthcoming if any further problems developed in this area. "... It is the explicit desire of the local American authorities that every youth should have the opportunity to view these American films."⁶⁹

Other concerns were expressed in a Weekly Report to the director of the Information Control Division, U.S. Army, dated 26 January 1946, from Lt. Col. Irving Dilliard, chief of the Office of Military Government Bavaria. Dilliard mentions the situation with the Plattling mayor described previously, but also expresses concern that the mayor of Klingenberg was engaged in the screening of German pictures for censorship reasons, and that he was inviting German friends to the screenings. He also expressed concern that in Landsberg, the headmaster of a local school was prohibiting children from visiting the local movie house, and those who disobeyed were beaten up in school.⁷⁰

The films allowed into Germany from America were closely screened by military authorities. Gen. Robert A. McClure, in a memorandum to the Film, Theater

and Music Control Section of the U.S. Information Control Service, ordered the American film *The Maltese Falcon* withdrawn from circulation in German theaters because the film "... simply perpetuates the Goebbles (sic) Chicago gangster propaganda line." In the same memo, McClure expressed "my complete lack of confidence in the New York Review Board's judgment," and ordered that films would henceforth be accepted only after they had passed review by his office or by the Film, Theater and Music Control Section. The New York Review Board had been set up by civilian authorities in the United States to review film destined to Germany, and this memo, in effect, revoked the authority of that board to decide what films would be allowed for showing in Germany.⁷¹

The screening process for feature films considered for German audiences was a complicated one, and it entailed the participation of a German for the purpose of ascertaining political implications of films that might go undetected by a non-Germans.

The actual screening of German motion picture film is to be carried out by the Film Censorship Officer and one member of the "Kammer der Kunstschaffenden" (Chamber of Creative Artists).

The Film Censorship Officer, after screening a film, will make his comments on the Screening Report Form (sample attached). He will also make his recommendations as to the classification of such screened film.

The member of the Chamber of Creative Artists who attended such screening will submit his comments as to the advisability of showing such film to the German public from a political point of view, and as to any knowledge he may possess about any one person actively engaged in the making of such picture, in writing. His comment will be attached to the Screening Report Form.⁷²

After screening, motion pictures were placed into one of three classification groups. Category A films were those that had received unanimous recommendation as

suitable for showing to German civilian audiences. Category B films had been unanimously recommended as suitable, but with certain conditions such as deletions of credit titles or minor cuts or alterations. Category C films were deemed unsuitable for showing to German audiences.⁷³

Among other films recommended for withdrawal from German theaters in early 1946 because they “might evoke unfavorable criticism of the American way of life” were *Action in the North Atlantic*, *Corvette K-225*, *Wing and a Prayer*, *Fighting Lady*, *Destination Tokyo*, *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, *Topper Returns*, *Magic in Music*, and *So Proudly We Hail*.⁷⁴ Films approved for showing to German audiences included *Snow White*, *Madame Curie*, *I Married a Witch*, *Our Town*, *Across the Pacific* and *Pride and Prejudice*.⁷⁵ Concerns had earlier been expressed over showing of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Great Dictator*,⁷⁶ although there is no indication that those films were actually withdrawn or kept out of German circulation.

The Information Control Division of the U.S. Army had set firm policy in this area on 28 September 1945, some seven months before the withdrawal of *The Maltese Falcon*. Guidelines established by that division in December 1945 ordered the Film, Theater and Music Control Section to reject those films that:

1. Glorify ideology of Fascism, Nazism and racial distinction.
2. Glorify or idealize war or militarism.
3. Politically subvert or pervert German history.
4. Glorify or idealize the German Army
5. Ridicule, or seem derogatory or uncomplimentary of Allied peoples, their governments, their political or national leaders.

6. Deal with German revenge.
7. Ridicule or criticize the religious feelings and religious attitudes of others.
8. Glorify or idealize the thoughts and/or acts of German leaders whose opinions or actions or political philosophy was imperialistic at the expense of the allies.
9. Originate in a book or script of a known Nazi Party member or supporter.
10. Originate through the creative efforts of known Nazi Party members or proven active supporters. Those whose creative effort contribute to the making of a picture shall be: producer, director, production chief, author, scenario writer, actors and actresses, composer, musical score adapter and film editor.⁷⁷

Those policies were essentially updated and established as the “Principles for Inter-Allied Censorship of German Films” in May 1946. Most of the guidelines remained the same, except that No. 10 also excluded films whose participants were “under prosecution by the Allied Occupation Authorities.”⁷⁸

Film policy for occupied Germany was firmly in place by the time the Marshall Plan took effect in June 1947. The *Welt im Film* series was initiated in May 1945, and although the first issues of the series were crude and of dubious value in the “re-education” of the Germans, the effort matured significantly in the latter part of 1945 and into 1946, and generally followed a path consistent with overall policy throughout the decade.

When the war ended, efforts began immediately to re-educate the Germans toward democracy and to make them realize the errors of their past and the anguish and turmoil they had unleashed upon the world. But in retrospect, few see any successes in this endeavor.⁷⁹

If early postwar film policy was failure, and whether it succeeded or failed remains in dispute, perhaps it was due to an arrogant assumption on the part of the

Allies that one culture is capable of re-educating another, especially when those being “re-educated” were more concerned with feeding and protecting themselves than with ideological embellishment. Hans Habe, author of *Off Limits: A Novel of Occupied Germany* and *All My Sins: An Autobiography*, puts it this way: “The idea that a nation should look back, questioning and repenting, was the concept of a conqueror.... The people only worried about how to fill their stomachs and their stoves.”⁸⁰

But the prevailing attitude among Allied commanders, driven by a statement by President Roosevelt a year before the end of hostilities in Europe, was that the Germans must be punished for what they had done. They must be reminded over and over that their activities were an affront to the civilized world. In September 1944, Roosevelt had stated:

Too many people here (in the United States) and in England hold the view that the German people as a whole are not responsible for what has taken place -- that only a few Nazis are responsible. That unfortunately is not based on fact. The German people as a whole must have it driven home to them that the whole nation has been engaged in a lawless conspiracy against the decencies of modern civilization.⁸¹

As a result of this attitude among U.S. officials, the Germans were given mandatory doses of defeat and guilt themes in such film projects as *Welt im Film*. The idea was to punish the Germans by presenting harsh images of destruction wrought by the Allies but instigated by the Germans themselves. As we shall see, those harsh images included the execution of Germans, and to German viewers, they were being executed simply because they were German.

The Marshall Plan’s European film unit produced numerous documentaries during the period from 1948 to 1955. Albert Hemsing, a chief architect in that effort,

describes the chief goals of the unit, including one of "Anti-Communist Cold War propaganda."⁸² *Welt im Film*, as we will see later, fit snugly into this pattern during the late 1940s. It would be a pattern that would dominate all film endeavors by the Allies during the closing years of the decade.

***Welt im Film: The "Psychological Warfare" Era,
May-August 1945***

Near the end of April 1945, in the waning days of the Third Reich, Adolf Hitler, his new wife, Eva Braun, and others who remained close to him until the end huddled together in a Berlin bunker, worrying collectively about the advancing Russians and what they would do to them if they found them alive.⁸³ At a time when bloody battles were still being waged in the Pacific, a team working for the Psychological Warfare Division of Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) was preparing for the first releases of *Welt im Film*.⁸⁴ Planning for the series had begun in London earlier in the year.⁸⁵ As early as February 1945, some three months before the cessation of hostilities, reports describing the newsreel effort circulated among those responsible for its implementation. One such report, issued on 15 February 1945, referred to the need for screening of dummy reels and the test-recording of potential commentators.⁸⁶ With the Psychological Warfare Division of SHAEF working on the project, it was apparent that the tone of the series, at least that of the early issues, would reflect "the harshest interpretations of occupation policy,"⁸⁷ driven by the Allied desire to drive home defeat and guilt themes and to punish the Germans for the destruction they had wrought upon the world. And indeed, the tone was harsh. The first ten issues were filled with scenes of German cities devastated by Allied bombing, the defeat of Germany's

allies in Europe and Asia, and, perhaps most startling, executions of Germans without explanation, or with the simple reason that those being executed were “spies and saboteurs.”⁸⁸ The first issue, released on 18 May 1945, included, among other items, scenes of the ruins of German cities, of German ex-prisoners of war returning home, of looting in Germany, and of the execution of a German spy.⁸⁹

But German audiences did not see “spies and saboteurs” being executed. They only saw Germans being executed, and to those audiences, people were being executed simply because they were German.⁹⁰ The purpose of such execution portrayals was likely twofold. One, it had been decided early in the development of the series that Germans would be made to feel collective guilt their World War II atrocities. Second, those creating the series, in line with overall policy, saw the need to limit resistance to the occupation of their country by Allied troops, and frightening them into submission was apparently the tactic seen as most desirable.

Negative audience reaction from German movie-goers as well as from German POWs being held in Britain, however, caused *Welt im Film* producers to rethink that position, and execution scenes were dropped after the first 10 issues. Later, during the second era of *Welt im Film*, excluding footage of public executions became a matter of policy, although some execution scenes slipped by first-line censors. In July 1946, an officer of the Information Control Division expressed disappointment to *Welt im Film* producers at issue No. 59 in general. But he especially took offense to an execution scene, and ordered it removed from the issue:

The second item, the death of Frank in Prague, contains entirely too sketchy a summary of the reasons for his execution. It shows the now familiar figure in profile of a man receiving sentence of death without flinching and might readily lead the audience to feel that the man met his death like a hero. We and the British are opposed to public executions and in our eyes the sight of the man after hanging is objectionable. Under the circumstances instructions have been issued to Berlin and are now being issued to both U.S. and British Zones to remove this number from the reel. At best the subject was a bit old.⁹¹

The initial issues of *Welt im Film* were designed to let the Germans know that they had been totally defeated, to instill a sense of guilt by presenting images of the atrocities committed by their country, to inflict punishment, and to offer a plan through which they might realize the benefits of democracy. Early emphasis was on guilt, however, and bombed out German cities were seen in every issue, along with scenes from the concentration camps. The entire fifth issue of the series was dedicated to the most horrifying images of those death camps.⁹²

The "Psychological Warfare" era of *Welt im Film*, while emphasizing the punishment aspect of that design, was driven by broader policy elements detailed in an agreement between President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, prime minister of Great Britain, during conferences in Quebec in 1944. Those elements decided upon at the Quebec conference were demilitarization, denazification, deindustrialization, collective guilt, and nonfraternization of occupying troops with German citizens.⁹³

None of these policy elements would be successful for a variety of reasons, but they all had a significant impact on the way films were presented during the era immediately following the war. Demilitarization of Germany made little sense by 1947 when the Cold War began to dominate Allied thoughts and policy and when it became apparent that an armed Germany would act as a buffer between the Soviet Union and

the West; Denazification had been impractical because of the magnitude of conducting investigations on every person placed in a position of authority; Deindustrialization never got off the ground because of the realization that a strong German economy would also be useful as a buffer to the Soviet Union; Instilling collective guilt could not be accomplished because of practical matters relating to food and housing for the Germans; and nonfraternization between American occupying forces and German citizens was totally unenforceable.⁹⁴

So those responsible for the *Welt im Film* series set out immediately with an agenda that emphasized “unconditional surrender,” with initial issues using such titles and terminology as “Germany is Beaten,” the German surrender is “unconditional” and “absolute,” and the defeat of Germany by the Allies is “complete and final.”⁹⁵ But those themes would last only a short while, and in August 1945, coinciding with the move of the *Welt im Film* operation from London to Munich in the zone of Germany occupied by the United States, the series opened a new era, the “Informational Era,” which lasted throughout most of 1946 and into 1947.

Analysis of Issue No. 13

The food shortage in Germany was a key element of issue No. 13,⁹⁶ which was released around 10 August 1945. Agriculture endeavors showing men and women working in the fields were used to emphasize the point that “every square meter” of available land must be used for the production of food. The issue contained a segment of Truman arriving in Germany and being greeted by Russian and American officers, and states that Truman, along with other Allied officials, “find a destroyed Berlin.”

A segment depicting children playing on former Nazi antiaircraft guns is accompanied with the narration, “weapons of war are now toys for children.” Scenes of destruction from around Germany prevail in Issue No. 13, and the narrator says that the scenes are similar to those seen in London some five years before.

The “Informational” Era August 1945-July 1947

The shift in emphasis for *Welt im Film* from psychological warfare to presentation of information came in August 1945, when the newsreel began allowing Germans themselves to speak to their fellow citizens, courtesy of British members of the newsreel team. The lessons were clear. They extolled the virtues of democracy, of bringing up children in a wholesome environment, and of being “honest and tolerant human beings.”⁹⁷

While the content of *Welt im Film* was always of primary importance, certain underlying issues had developed by early 1946. What to show the Germans seemed to be the easy part. But establishing a quadripartite effort with cooperation from all four Allied powers occupying Germany, presenting material in a timely manner, and maintaining cooperation between various newsreel and film-making agencies for suitable exchange of footage, all were areas of concern among American military leaders.

But first, the content of *Welt im Film*; what it was to show, and perhaps more importantly, what it was not to show. The original tenets of film policy for occupied Germany included the education of the Germans in Western ways. But along with such educational efforts came the continued need to remind Germany of the devastation it

had wrought, and to warn its citizens of consequences if further hostile efforts were undertaken. A memorandum circulated by the U.S. Information Control Division on 16 August 1945, at the virtual outset of the Informational era of *Welt im Film*, tells of the need to present the news as "a lesson, a reminder, and a warning." But how receptive would German audiences be to such an approach? And how attentive would they be to the lessons offered?

Germans on the whole are receptive and the overall reaction is favorable. Attendance ranges from capacity to satisfactory. And yet we all realize that once this novelty has worn off (in Berlin it has already) we shall find it increasingly difficult to deliver our lessons straight. Will the Germans come in week after week to play the guilty pupil? Sure enough we will be showing them our feature film, pure entertainment along with the documentaries. They will come in all right. Only we may find them dozing apathetically through these documentaries and educational newsreels -- to be bright and ready for Rita Hayworth in *Cover Girl*. . .⁹⁸

In September 1945, film policy officials established a "General Outline of Policy" that actually set footage percentages for coverage of national and international events. Domestic German stories would comprise 40 percent of each newsreel issue, British stories, 20 percent, U.S. stories, 20 percent, and others, 20 percent. The General Outline of Policy ordered that the 40 percent of domestic German content would illustrate "(a) Revival of freedom of thought and expression and the exchange of ideas, within the framework of I.C.D. policy Instruction No. 2 dated 4th September 1945, (b) Allied assistance in German rehabilitation in the fields of reconstruction, re-establishment of peaceful industry and agriculture, transportation, health services, education, etc. and (c) War guilt trials."⁹⁹

From Britain and the United States, according to the policy, content should be devoted to Allied efforts at maintaining peace, examples of democracy at work in those

countries, reportage of important news events, and illustration of postwar reconstruction and other problems outside Germany.¹⁰⁰

A Joint Newsreel Control Board was established by Britain and the United States in early 1946, and adhering to overall Allied film policy, established a set of directives to *Welt im Film* Outpost Assignment Desks. The directives, like those of general film policies listed above, were fairly rigid. And although they illustrated the total extent of military control of the series, they also portrayed the level of sophistication the series had reached compared to the early “psychological warfare” days.

The directives issued by the Joint Newsreel Control Board are as follows:

1. The object of the Joint US-British Newsreel operation, “Welt im Film,” is “... to contribute to the enlightenment of Germans and Austrians by presenting news in pictures from throughout the world, including the four zones of occupation in Germany, and from Austria.
2. The following excerpts from the basic agreement will indicate the channels into which we are to direct our efforts:
3. In pictures from occupied countries the aim should be to assist the Control authorities and to show reconstruction and restoration, particularly through the efforts of the local population.
4. The object of the newsreel is to keep the German people informed of those current events which are likely to have a bearing on their lives. To stimulate interest, the reel must also have entertainment value, but this is definitely secondary in importance.
5. Humor and documentary items, which cannot be classed strictly as news, may be included when they contribute directly to the object of establishing a peaceful, tolerant and democratic Germany.
6. Deprivation suffered ... in consequence of the war should be emphasized.

7. Items illustrating military pomp and display, or celebrating the Allied victory over the Germans, shall be included only when they are of first-class news value, and emphasis on them should be avoided.

8. A section of the newsreel shall be devoted to sports items...

9. The newsreel presents essentially the Allied view of world events, including German and Austrian events, and therefore must be subject to control.

10. This control is vested in the Joint Newsreel Control Board, which transmits its directives to the Joint Editorial Board in Munich.

11. If at any time a question of policy arises in connection with the shooting of a news story, please get in touch at once with the Managing Editor.¹⁰¹

The objective of most of these directives seemed to be in establishing *Welt im Film* as a legitimate newsreel, providing information to an information-starved Germany. But the guilt element of "deprivation suffered" is also present in the directives, along with a de-emphasis on the "pomp and display" of the Allied victory over the Germans.

"The object of *Welt im Film* is to contribute to the enlightenment of Germans and Austrians by presenting news in pictures from throughout the world, including the four zones of occupation in Germany, and from Austria," a policy statement issued in early 1946 said. But the newsreel should present "essentially the Allied view of world events, including German and Austrian events, and therefore must be subject to control."¹⁰²

The result was a newsreel that provided information to the Germans, tempered the Allied victory celebration to a degree, but kept a certain emphasis on guilt and devastation themes. *Welt im Film* issues throughout 1946, therefore, still contained

these guilt and devastation elements, despite the overall effort to move into the realm of news and portrayal of actual events.

During the Informational period, many themes ran through *Welt im Film*, but certain ones were more prominent than others. The delivery of food to various areas of Germany was stressed, apparently to emphasize the good will of the Allies toward their former enemies. In August 1946, Ray A. Ioanes, chief of the Rationing Section Economics Division of the Office of Military Government for Germany, provided a list to *Welt im Film* officials of people who would provide information on food import operations throughout the country. Ioanes provided information on food import operations in Bremen, Bavaria and Berlin, incoming fish deliveries from the Scandinavian countries, and also provided the names of contact people for tours of mills, factories and storage facilities involved in the food distribution effort.¹⁰³ This goodwill theme had become prominent in *Welt im Film* by mid-1946. Allied film officials were anxious to "... arouse lots of goodwill..." throughout the occupied zones.¹⁰⁴

Late in 1945, the effort was to emphasize devastation of the major cities of Germany, but to also include a secondary element of rebuilding.¹⁰⁵ By March 1946, story selection for *Welt im Film* had shifted its focus to the reconstruction of shattered German dwellings and away from the presentation of images of the destruction of those dwellings. Communications and transportation improvements were also emphasized, along with the revival of free speech, press and political activity. A list of subjects to be presented in *Welt im Film* provided in a March 1946 report by the Newsreel Assignment Desk included segments on a convention of newspaper licensees, football

between Stuttgart and Frankfurt, Radio Frankfurt, vocational training, Gen. Patton's funeral, the opening of new bridges, an air raid shelter converted into a hotel, a visit of Russian correspondents to Frankfurt, the hanging of Karl von Wiegand, a nutrition check on German civilians, renewed operation of the Dunlop Tire factory, a Communist Party meeting, an ice show, and elections in Oberhain.¹⁰⁶

The list illustrates the basic themes of food and nutrition, economic development, democracy in action, the continued Russian alliance, sports and entertainment, and, of course, the punishment theme that continued to linger from the "psychological warfare" era of *Welt im Film*.

The newsreel specifically avoided any indication of a rift between the victorious Allies, and this resolve to show unification was reflected in the handling of Winston Churchill's famous "Iron Curtain" speech in March 1946. The speech was reported in very general terms in issue No. 44 of *Welt im Film*, and no details of what Churchill actually said were presented.¹⁰⁷

During this same time period, in early 1946, U.S. film policy makers also became concerned with convincing the American people of the need for prolonged occupation of Germany and for the appropriation of funds such occupation would require over the years. Officials were searching for ways to produce films aimed at German audiences as well as American audiences. The twofold purpose of such films would be to emphasize "the continuing problems in Germany so as to convince Americans of the need for prolonged occupation and for the appropriations which such occupation will require over a period of years," and also "to show them (German audiences) that Germans are human beings in a world of human beings and are neither

worse or better than the rest ... that militant nationalism was in itself an affront to the rights of other peoples ... that Nazi doctrines, in their will to dominate over other nations, required from the Germans themselves not discipline, but servitude.”¹⁰⁸

The Truman administration was also seeking material during this time to illustrate to the American public the need for food imports into Germany. *Welt im Film* officials were requested to supply footage on agriculture production efforts, the average daily German ration, Swedish Red Cross work with German children, and other material dealing with the food supply theme.¹⁰⁹

Also by March 1946, British and U.S. film officials became engaged in a fine-tuning exercise of *Welt im Film* by initiating a “critique” of pending issues by British and American film officers. What material to run was generally agreed upon, but how much of a particular topic to run was causing some concern. The British representatives of *Welt im Film*, after reviewing issues 39, 40 and 41, noted that ski-jumping had been featured in all three issues, and swimming in Australia had been presented twice. The British called such repetition “monotonous.”¹¹⁰ The British also expressed a desire to increase the amount of coverage of reconstruction efforts within Germany, and noted that certain stories shot earlier in the year by the Hamburg newsreel team had not yet been included into any of the newsreel issues.¹¹¹

By the fall of 1946, *Welt im Film* officials were seeking material from a variety of sources, including footage shot in the United States for the purpose of presenting “a picture of American life we can present the Germans which will give them something to emulate,” but by avoiding images of “the antics of our flaming youth or our lunatic fringe to the audience we are trying to educate.”¹¹²

We want factual reports on America, and its progress in social life, in science, in industry, in education, housing, agriculture ... A little of the Miami Bathing Beauties, the Marmalade Queen of Weehauken, the Pin-up Pretty from Peoria, jutterbuggers ... Light stuff, humorous material, or sports items are very welcome as relief for our purpose. ... ¹¹³

Analysis of Issue No. 82

Issue No. 82 of the series,¹¹⁴ a wrap-up of 1946, provides a look at prevailing themes for that year. The issue provides some intriguing images that had been presented in issues throughout the year.

The opening segment of *Welt im Film* No. 82 deals with a traditional German New Year's celebration, the first the citizens of Germany had enjoyed since before the outbreak of hostilities in the late 1930s. Another segment shows a variation of the "swords to plowshares" concept, with workers in a factory converting Nazi helmets into various types of cooking utensils, including pots and pans. The narrator says the factory is producing "not what they (the German people) fear, but what they need." The war trials in Nuremberg were emphasized in this issue, along with the first free elections for Germans since the late 1930s. The segment on Nuremberg points out that the trials themselves had ended on 1 October 1946, about three months before the release of issue No. 82, and also notes that of 22 people on trial at Nuremberg, 12 were sentenced to death. Nuremberg is referred to as "once a city of party rallies -- now is a city of redemption." The huge Nazi Party rally of 1934 depicted in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* was held in Nuremberg, the "mythical" birthplace of Nazism.

During a segment on free elections in Nuremberg, the narrator points out that the election saw an 87 percent turnout, with the Christian Social Party winning the election. A segment on a soccer match in Stuttgart between a team from Northern

German and a team from Southern Germany was used to illustrate that sports had been revived in postwar Germany.

Issue No. 82 also contains a segment detailing a crackdown on those involved in the black market in Berlin, and depicts police rounding up citizens and taking them away in a truck, presumably to prison. These people are referred to in the segment as “enemies of the state.” A segment from Hamburg depicts the unloading of wheat, and another of school children eating lunch illustrates the theme of feeding a hungry Germany and ensuring “that students eat healthy.”

A segment of aircraft landing in Berlin symbolized the connecting of Germany to the rest of the world. Berlin, the narrator says, has once again become “part of the international air traffic” system. The issue presents images of German prisoners of war returning from Britain, France, the United States and Russia, and the theme of rebuilding from the ruins of the war is given considerably play. The narrator tells of a “cleanup and buildup” campaign under way in Germany.

The issue also depicts a traditional presentation of “Kasperletheater,” or “The Punch and Judy Show,” and German children are seen watching the puppet presentation. Many of the children are at first horrified at the image of a dragon attempting to eat one of the characters, and then are somewhat delighted that the dragon is driven away.

Coal mining and the production of electricity in the Ruhr were depicted in issue No. 82 as part of the rebuilding and economic development theme. A treaty between the United States and Britain uniting the two zones of Germany under those countries’ control was also mentioned. The issue ends with images of pigs in a row and the

statement in German, "Have Lots of Pig." Pigs are a sign of good luck in Germany, and the statement is a traditional "good luck" expression.

The Quadripartite Effort

In late 1945, well before the pro-Communist and anti-Communist propaganda battles of 1947 and beyond, United States military film officials sought a quadripartite newsreel effort, one produced by Britain, the United States, France and Russia, the four occupying powers. The purpose for such an effort was to project an image of Allied unity, an idea U.S. military officials viewed as extremely important. But such a joint effort would never be. The idea got no further than preliminary discussion among representatives of the occupying forces in early 1946, and passed into oblivion by the end of 1947.

Issue No. 82 of *Welt im Film*, the 1946 overview, contained a 35-second segment (fairly long by newsreel standards) of military officials from the four powers convening in Berlin. The Russian representative was introduced to the *Welt im Film* audience along with military representatives from Britain, the United States and France.¹¹⁵ Germany had barely entered into the Iron Curtain era, and the Cold War had not yet gotten completely off the ground. The United States, under the leadership of President Harry S. Truman, was still interested in maintaining a good relationship with the Russians. The idea seemed to be that if the United States was nice to the Russians, the Russians would somehow support the notion of a "free world" in the Western sense.¹¹⁶

So throughout much of 1946, discussion of a quadripartite newsreel effort continued among United States military officials. The idea had been batted around

since the inception of *Welt im Film*, but apparently was first seriously discussed among American military officials in November and December 1945. On 29 November 1945, those involved in the U.S. newsreel effort met and agreed that "Everything in our power should be done to put the newsreel on a four Power basis, beginning with interchange of newsreels and clips and moving toward a quadripartite newsreel for distribution in all four zones."¹¹⁷ And a memorandum to Eric Clark, a deputy chief of the Film, Theater and Music Section of the U.S. Information Control Service, dated 4 December 1945, provided points that should be covered when preparing for a quadripartite effort. The memo emphasized the need for a joint effort among the four occupational forces, and sought an agreement from France and Russia to improve the newsreel "as much as possible and (to) giving it the widest possible information base."¹¹⁸ The memorandum, and all others obtained by this author, contained no information that would indicate a desire on the part of U.S. military officials to exert control over the project, and in fact, a very benevolent and cooperative attitude seemed to prevail.

In early January 1946, Nicholas Nabokoff, another deputy chief of the Film, Theater and Music Control Section of the U.S. Information Control Service, asked of a staff member, "What is -- from our viewpoint -- the most functional way in which the Russians and French could participate in the (at the present time) Anglo American newsreel in order to render this newsreel a quadripartite Allied venture?"¹¹⁹ So the questions being asked by American military officials were not "should we?" but "how can we?"

Efforts to develop such a joint effort began to fade late in 1946, however, as Americans and British alike began to realize the magnitude of Russia's resolve to place,

in the words of Winston Churchill in March 1946, an "iron curtain" across Germany between the East and the West.¹²⁰

Newsreel Clip Exchange

During the time period that U.S. military officials were stressing the importance of a quadripartite endeavor by all occupational powers, they were also urging a newsreel clip exchange program between *Welt im Film* and other newsreels, both inside the occupied zones of Germany and elsewhere. Like the quadripartite effort in general, U.S. military authorities were interested in the exchange between *Welt im Film* and newsreel endeavors in the French and Russian zones of occupied Germany "as a symbol of Allied unity to the German people."¹²¹ The effort to develop an exchange program with French and Russian newsreels was consistent with the desires of U.S. military officials to develop an overall quadripartite newsreel project.¹²²

United States authorities were also encouraging exchange programs with newsreels produced in other European countries and in the United States as well. A Swedish newsreel known as *Svensk Filmindustri* sought an exchange of newsreel footage with *Welt im Film* late in 1947,¹²³ and later (July 1948), during the "Anti-Communist Propaganda" period of *Welt im Film*, newsreel enterprises operating in the United States such as *March of Time* began seeking clips from *Welt im Film*.¹²⁴ Exchanges had been initiated earlier between *Welt im Film* and such newsreel productions as *Actualites Francaises*, *Gaumont British*, *Novosti Dnia*, *Tyden ve Filmu* and *Unio News*. The result of these exchanges was an impressive array of international stories for presentation by all of the newsreels.¹²⁵

Because the actual operation of *Welt im Film* was in Germany and because of the accessibility producers had to the various events and incidents occurring in the zones occupied by the British and the United States, material from the series was in great demand from other commercial producers by mid-1947. Various companies sought library material from *Welt im Film* for feature film productions, and the British counterpart to *March of Time*, a series known as *Modern Age*, sought material from *Welt im Film* as well. U.S. film officials pondered over the means of making footage available to commercial producers “on equal terms.”¹²⁶

Questions now arises (sic) whether “Welt im Film” material should be made available for feature production and on what basis. Being Government operated we consider that “Welt im Film” material would have to be made available to all that might ask for it on equal terms and that such terms should be based on normal commercial rates now applying in the U.S. Sale would have to be made from “Welt im Film” library in Munich directly. Rawstock required for making of prints or lavenders of material would have to be provided by buyer.¹²⁷

In February 1946, U.S. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes made a direct request of *Welt im Film* officials that German-Austrian material contained in the series “be offered (to) commercial companies for U.S. release.” Byrnes noted that *Welt im Film* issues 22 through 26 dealing with Dachau orphans, GIs on a Danube boat pleasure trip, the Arlberg Express reopening, the Ischl Festival, the removal of a swastika from a Hamburg trade union building, theaters opening in Munich, and the licensing of the first German newspaper following the war were “highly desired” by U.S. companies.¹²⁸

Timeliness of News Reports

From the outset, *Welt im Film* was plagued with logistical problems, and concern was expressed as early as October 1945 of “outdated newsreels.”¹²⁹ At the end

of hostilities, Allied forces had shut down all movie theaters, and began reopening them one by one only after licensing procedures were established. As more and more theaters were allowed to open, the demand for limited copies of *Welt im Film* began to grow, and presentations in theaters would eventually lag behind the actual event by as much as 18 weeks.¹³⁰ During the early part of 1946, the number of theaters licensed to operate increased dramatically, but the number of *Welt im Film* copies distributed to the various zones did not. In Bavaria alone, some 200 civilian movie theaters were in operation by the end of April 1946, yet only 30 copies of *Welt im Film* were available for distribution each week.¹³¹ Nearly a year and a half later, in September 1947, a total of 471 theaters had been approved for operation in Bavaria, yet the number of copies available for distribution of *Welt im Film* had only been increased by three, to 33.¹³² Efforts by film officials to increase the number of copies made earlier in 1947 had been to no avail,¹³³ apparently because of limited funds available for the project.¹³⁴ The problem was not being taken lightly by film authorities. As one official put it in a January 1947 memorandum, "It becomes a joke when the Christmas issue is screened during Easter." He went on to note that with more theaters due for opening, "the situation will become worse."¹³⁵

Other factors also caused delays in presenting material. In February 1946, theaters were apparently being licensed in the British Zone at a much greater rate than in the American Zone. Records show that as of 17 December 1945, 81 newsreel prints were available for distribution in the American Zone, which had 310 theaters operating at the time, and 91 were available for distribution in the British Zone, where 770 theaters were in operation. With nearly two and a half times the number of theaters in

operation in the British Zone than in the American Zone, and only 10 additional copies, British officials sought a more equal distribution of copies.¹³⁶

At one point in early 1946, film officials transferred printing of *Welt im Film* issues bound for Berlin from Munich to Berlin in hopes of speeding up the process. But the effort actually produced greater delays because of slower processing in Berlin, and audiences there were seeing issues one week later than audiences in other occupied areas.¹³⁷ That situation was corrected in May 1946 with a transfer of some of the copying duties back to Munich and a speeded up schedule in Berlin.¹³⁸

The “Anti-Communist Propaganda” Era Of *Welt im Film*, July 1947-June 1952

By mid-July 1947, *Welt im Film* began to undergo another change. One of the primary images produced by the series prior to that time was one of Allied unity, that is, unity among the four forces occupying Germany -- Britain, the United States, France and Russia. But with increasing pressure to match pro-Communist propaganda being produced by the Russians for East German consumption, American and British military officials began changing their view on the unity issue, and criticism of the Soviet Union began to creep into the *Welt im Film* series in August 1947.

But the emphasis of *Welt im Film* during the early part of 1948 on humanitarian efforts toward the Germans continued, and themes of rebuilding a devastated Germany and providing its citizens with essential needs dominated. In March 1948, military film officials sought maximum radio and newsreel coverage of the arrival and distribution of donated food and clothing from the United States. The cargo, arriving on the U.S. ship “Gretna Victory,” represented “the intangible spirit of helpfulness, encouragement and

good neighborliness which prompted and attended the collection and dispatch of these gifts," according to the ship's commander, Capt. Charles R. Jeffs, U.S. Navy.¹³⁹

There exist no doubt that the gifts of food and clothing stored in the holds of this ship will be most gratefully received by the hungry and needy people of Germany and Austria. But the most valuable cargo which this ship carries, it seems to me, and the cargo which will be more appreciated than even the highly-prized material gifts, is an intangible substance into which the stevedores will be unable to sink their hooks but yet is to be found in all of this ships holds. It is the spirit of helpfulness, encouragement and good neighborliness which prompted and attended the collection and dispatch of these gifts.¹⁴⁰

The ship, loaded with 3,000 tons of food and clothing donated by people of the Northwestern United States, docked in Bremen on 9 March 1948. School children were given a holiday to greet the ship and to participate in the ensuing ceremonies. At the Bremen docks, the cargo was transferred from the ship and loaded into "the Friendship Train," bound for various cities throughout Germany. Accommodations for German press representations were provided on the train, so that military officials were able to maximize coverage not only in newsreels, but among local publications and broadcast stations as well. The event was designed to draw extensive coverage at dockside in Bremen, but was also designed to pick up press coverage along the way.

Official ceremonies are planned in Bremen on Wednesday, and Wednesday evening or early Thursday the Friendship Train will depart for Dusseldorf in the British Zone where ten cars will be detached with appropriate ceremonies. From there, the train will proceed to Mainz in the French Zone where another ten cars will be detached and from there to Frankfurt where fifteen cars will be detached. The remaining cars will then be brought to Berlin.

Appropriate ceremonies are planned at each of the stops and it is desired that full publicity be given this project. ...

In connection with the March Food Publicity Campaign, it is desired that as much publicity as possible be given the train through the German press and radio. ...¹⁴¹

Welt im Film officials were notified on 9 July 1948 of the arrival the following day of U.S. Rep. Stefan, an "important member of Appropriations Committee," who would be presenting \$1,000 for food from an American city to the town of Kamen, Germany, located some 70 miles from Dusseldorf. *Welt im Film* officials were instructed to give the event "all possible publicity, for obvious reasons."¹⁴²

In addition to the food and clothing goodwill theme, others remained in the series throughout the anti-Communist propaganda period. Economic development remained high on the list of themes to emphasize. Central to the economic development theme presented in *Welt im Film* during the early part of 1948 was coal mining in Ruhr. Military officials saw the need to increase coverage of Ruhr industrial activities to illustrate its importance to the overall recovery of the German economy.

The Military Governors of the U.S. and British Zones of occupied Germany have acknowledged the primary importance of coal production to the recovery of the entire German economy, the economy of Western Europe and the success of the ECA. ... It is believed that virtually every release of *Die Welt im Film* contains one clip whose commentary could include a perfectly legitimate commercial plug for Ruhr coal mining.¹⁴³

In addition to illustrating economic recovery brought about by British and U.S. efforts, the idea was to "keep the Ruhr area before the minds of the public" for needed public support in the area of labor recruitment and food shipments required to maintain coal production.¹⁴⁴

I wish to take this opportunity to emphasize to you the vital importance of the mission which has been given to this office by General Robertson and General Clay, to vastly increase the scope of the Public Relations activities concerned with the production of coal and steel in the Ruhr.

Our mission is not only to publicize all German matters in the Ruhr areas, but also to reach the German people in all of the Western Zones to the end of increasing labor recruitment and to obtain willingly from the German people the additional increments of food required to maintain coal production.¹⁴⁵

The series continued to emphasize the "virtues of democracy" theme throughout the period. In June 1948, extensive coverage was given to a German journalist visiting the United States to illustrate freedom of the press. Film officials wanted to "stress that Mr. Reger (Eric Reger, the visiting journalist), like any working journalist in the United States, had free access to information from everywhere on the highest levels."¹⁴⁶ A script guide for a *Welt im Film* segment provides an outline of the visit:

Sequence I - Eric Reger arrives at Mitchell Field. First working journalist to visit the United States from postwar Germany, he is greeted by Lieut. Col. William A. Curtin, Executive Officer, and other CAD officials. Mr. Reger is in the United States to study first-hand the Press in a democracy.

Sequence II - Mr. Reger goes immediately to the Journalism Library at Columbia University, New York City, where he assists in preparing materials for the Munich Press Exhibit. With him are Mr. Elmer Cox, OMGUS Press Control Officer, and other journalists.

Sequence III - Mr. Reger consults with two top editors in their offices at the New York Times: Mr. Lester Market and Mr. Sheppard Stone. In the two-shot, Mr. Market and Mr. Reger discuss the need for more frequent cooperation between German and American journalists.

Sequence IV - Mr. Reger has free access everywhere to the news and news-makers. Here he visits New York City's piers where ships are loaded with foodstuffs, oil and machinery to aid European recovery

Sequence V - Mr. Reger goes to United Nations headquarters at Lake Success, Long Island where the General Assembly is in session. As a working newspaperman he takes a seat in the press gallery together with reporters from other nations.

Sequence VI - Mr. Reger is greeted by government officials upon his arrival at Union Station, Washington. He tours the capitol's historical sights. On the capital steps he confers with Senator Ball of Minnesota. As guest of the Senator he attends a session of the House of Representatives to hear discussion on the Marshall Plan for European Recovery.

At the National Gallery of Art he notes the popularity of the German art treasures on display there. He visits the Lincoln Memorial, national shrine for Americans; the Washington Monument; the world-famous cherry trees along the Potomac. And his three-day visit is filled with talks with average citizens and influential editors like Dick Hollander of the Washington Daily News.

Mr. Reger climaxes his Washington stay by attending a White House press conference where the President's press secretary is breaking important news. Mr. Reger notes the complete freedom with which correspondents cover top-level news sources in the United States.

Sequence VII - Mr. Reger reports on his United States impressions in a "Voice of America" broadcast to the German people. He compares notes with a German girl now studying at Briarcliff College.¹⁴⁷

While the food and clothing distribution efforts were hailed in *Welt im Film* as humanitarian efforts by citizens of the United States, and while economic development was presented as a joint U.S. and British effort, no specific comparisons were made between the way the Western Allied powers and the way the Soviet Union were performing in this area. But the transition of *Welt im Film* into a full-blown anti-Communist propaganda effort was just around the corner. Officials continued to emphasize humanitarian efforts without reference to Soviet activities through May,¹⁴⁸ but by July, it was clear that the series was destined to become a medium of exclusive anti-Communist propaganda. A memo from the Office of Military Government for Germany on 23 July 1948 offers a statement on the intent of a Berlin supplement to *Welt im Film*:

This division has, for the past four weeks, produced a weekly supplement to the official Anglo-American Military Government newsreel "Welt im Film," dealing with the Berlin situation. This Berlin supplement to the newsreel is of a political, informative nature and is intended to bring the situation in Berlin before the eyes of the movie audiences in the 2,800 cinemas of the U.S. and U.K. zones of Germany and Austria, to counteract communist propaganda. The special Berlin supplement will be continued weekly until further notice.¹⁴⁹

Meanwhile, in the Soviet sector of Germany, the newsreel *Der Augenzeuge*, a *Welt im Film* East German counterpart, had undergone its own evolution. The newsreel, also known as *Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft* (The Eyewitness), began operations in February 1946. At first, the series had kind words for all of the Allies, and, like *Welt im Film*, endorsed a theme of unity among Allied occupational forces. This lasted through 1947 and into 1948. But by the fall of 1948, the series was suddenly transformed into a Communist propaganda instrument, and people such as Winston Churchill who been formerly praised were now portrayed as Western imperialists.¹⁵⁰

But the shift by *Welt im Film* to match pro-Communist propaganda by *Der Augenzeuge* and other Soviet projects was cautious because of a fear among Allied officials that the Germans would view *Welt im Film* as an obvious propaganda tool and not take it seriously. The first indication that *Welt im Film* would take a new course in what was to be presented came in July 1947, when the Joint Newsreel Control Board issued the following policy statement following a meeting with newsreel editors:

It was agreed that the newsreel editors should hereafter deal frankly with political and other provocative issues provided that due care would be taken to present the respective viewpoints objectively and fairly. ... In general the JNCB undertook to serve as a shield for the editors so long as they would continue to treat every subject as news and thus to prevent the newsreel from becoming an obvious instrument of propaganda, as were the newsreels of the Nazi days.¹⁵¹

Within a month of this statement, *Welt im Film* offered its first criticism of the Soviet Union. A segment in issue No. 117 dealt with the poor physical condition of prisoners of war returning from Russia.¹⁵² In October, it was apparent that the United States had changed the course of *Welt im Film* and other film efforts entirely.

Because of the harsh and baseless attacks against the United States, its policies, and its principles made by Soviet-sponsored and licensed information media in Germany, U.S. Military Government on 28 October became an educational and informational program to explain to the German people the basic concepts of democracy as opposed to the communistic system.¹⁵³

When the United States first began to change the tone of *Welt im Film* during the second half of 1947, the British were reluctant to go along with the new direction of the newsreel series, and instructions came "from the highest quarter" that the line of British controlled sources of information in Germany was not to be changed in this respect.¹⁵⁴ But that reluctance was to change in 1948 as the Soviet Union increased its own confrontational tone.

On 24 June 1948, Joseph Stalin ordered a blockade of the non-Communist zones of Berlin, hoping to squeeze out the Allies and annex their zones to East Germany. The Allies responded with an extraordinary effort now known as the Berlin Airlift, during which 2.5 million tons of supplies were flown into the besieged city during a period of less than a year. The airlift lasted 321 days, and ended only after Stalin lifted the blockade on 12 May 1949.¹⁵⁵ The Berlin blockade and consequent airlift caused the British to rethink their position of keeping *Welt im Film* out of the realm of "anti-Communistic warfare," and once the airlift began, the newsreel became a

full-blown mouthpiece for the western side in the emerging Cold War without British opposition. The series remained in that mode for its duration.

Berlin Airlift operations and related topics dominated *Welt im Film* from June 1948 to May 1949. Every issue contained scenes from the Allied effort, including aircraft crash scenes and other unfortunate incidents that occurred along the way, apparently in an attempt to project *Welt im Film* as a truthful newsreel series rather than as a propaganda tool. Concern for how the German audiences perceived *Welt im Film* had been on Allied policy-makers minds from the outset. That was the primary reason execution scenes were dropped from the earliest issues, and that is why Allied officials went to great lengths to ensure that the series was not viewed by the Germans as a propaganda tool, which would have destroyed its effectiveness.

During the height of the Berlin Airlift, issues of *Welt im Film* emphasized the Allied effort to supply Germans with food and other essentials. The issues during this period were also very critical of Soviet activities, and state that power shortages and limitations on public transportation were due to the Soviet blockade of Berlin because of coal shortages. The Berlin Airlift is referred to in *Welt im Film* segments as "the biggest achievement in flight history," and the narrator notes that some 2.5 million people were being supported by the airlift. The airlift, according to the narrator, "demonstrates how strong the Allies are," and tells of the Allied determination in the effort so that Berlin "will not be a victim of the blockade."¹⁵⁶

A segment in the early days of the blockade tells of Russian promises to provide food to hungry Germans, but that those promises were never fulfilled. The narrator says that "Berliners know the Allies are the best guarantee against hunger." A segment also

depicts a huge rally held in the Schoeneberg District of Berlin for Germans of West Berlin “to continue the fight” against “the rape of the soul, the body and the mind” by the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁷ It was in this same district some 13 years later that President John F. Kenney made his famous “Ich bin ein Berliner” speech.

Welt im Film After the Berlin Airlift

By the time the British withdrew from the *Welt im Film* project in June 1950, other commercial newsreels had begun to appear on the West German scene, providing some competition for the U.S.-operated series. *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau*, for example, appeared in January 1950. It carried the same name of a series that had run in Nazi Germany during the war, and was actually produced by the West German government, but the connections between the Nazi series and the new one are too few to mention.¹⁵⁸ By the time *Welt im Film* passed into history in June 1952, after 369 issues, several other newsreels, including *Ufa*, later called *Ufa-dabei*, and *Zeit unter der Lupe* had appeared.¹⁵⁹ These newsreels lasted until 1978, when most German newsreels ceased operation altogether.

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²⁵ Taylor, *Film Propaganda*, 133.

²⁶ Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Newbury Park, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1986), 125.

²⁷ Short, *Film & Radio Propaganda in World War II*, 22.

²⁸ Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, 126.

²⁹ Taylor, *Film Propaganda*, 139.

³⁰ Ibid, 140.

³¹ Ibid, 141.

³² Ibid, 141.

³³ Ibid, 142.

³⁴ Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (New Jersey: The Princeton University Press, 1974), 67-76.

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CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Application of Propaganda Techniques

The careful selection of material for *Welt im Film* presentation as illustrated in written policy and in correspondence between military film officials after the war makes it clear that propaganda techniques developed from the early part of the 20th century through the World War II period were employed in production of the series. Harold D. Lasswell defined propaganda as “the technique of influencing human action by the manipulation of representations.”¹ Definitions by Carl Hovland,² L.W. Doob,³ and others apply directly to the methods used in the production of the *Welt im Film* series.

It appears that producers of *Welt im Film* believed in prevailing “magic bullet” and “hypodermic needle” theories of communication effects. They apparently believed that the presentations in *Welt im Film* would greatly influence all of those in the German audiences uniformly. But since those theories were first postulated, research has shown that important intervening variables such as demographic background of audience members influence reactions to messages and images being presented.⁴

The process of manipulating the representations of *Welt im Film* segments in all three eras under study began with the story selection process, continued through the music and narration dubbing process, and was even maintained after the issues were released to movie theaters with high-level criticism and orders for corrective action for future issues.⁵

“Newsreel” as a Misnomer

The primary difference between an actual news presentation and a presentation designed specifically to persuade the audience to accept a certain view is the manner in which material is selected and presented based on a particular philosophy. The philosophy behind an ideal news presentation does not include means of persuasion. News is presented without regard to audience reaction and with no intent to persuade the audience to accept or reject specific points of view. News is presented merely to offer information on matters that have an impact on the audience

It is for this reason that “newsreel” as it applies to *Welt im Film*, and as it applies to many other such endeavors as well, is a misnomer, for the “news” presented to German movie audiences was not news at all, but a carefully manipulated presentation designed to persuade the Germans to accept certain philosophies and ideas. The series demonstrates that certain media can have the semblance of news presentations, but are not actually news presentations at all.

Raymond Fielding suggests in *March of Time, 1935-1951* that newsreels were intended to play a propaganda role.⁶ He maintains that newsreels offered only a very superficial look at the news, and actually misrepresented reality. He points out in *The American Newsreel, 1911-1967* that newsreels often “created” scenes that did not exist in fact.⁷ It is for these reasons, according to Fielding, that newsreels lost credibility after World War II when television took over as the primary provider of visual news.

This study has allowed the author to make several conclusions related to the evolution of the *Welt im Film* series and to the content of the various eras. The series

underwent significant changes at various points in its seven-year history, and those changes have been traced through the three eras of *Welt im Film* dealt within this thesis.

The more obvious conclusions include the actual division of the three eras. The first, under the operation of a unit known as the “Psychological Warfare” Division, ran from May 18, 1945, the date of first issue, just days after the end of hostilities in Europe, until around the middle of August of that year. The abrupt change from the “Psychological Warfare” era to the “Informational” era came after negative audience reaction to execution scenes depicted in the first 10 issues. From August 1945 until around the middle of 1947, the newsreel took on a legitimate air, one of information and education, although obviously presented for maximum propaganda value. The shift from the Information era to the Anti-Communist Propaganda era was a bit more gradual, but can be seen distinctly in letters between Allied film officials in late 1947 and early 1948. The *Welt im Film* issues of that period themselves, however, provide the best illustration that they were anti-Communist propaganda.

The various eras are represented by documents and *Welt im Film* issues that illustrate the prevailing themes of those eras.

Prevailing Themes in Psychological Warfare Era

The prevailing themes of the Psychological Warfare era are evidenced in the actual issues of *Welt im Film* from that period. Others have viewed and analyzed the first 10 issues of *Welt im Film* and have offered various descriptions. After execution scenes were dropped following the first ten issues, certain themes associated with this era remained, but new ones from the emerging Information era were also present. Much of the footage presented in *Welt im Film* issue No. 13, which was released during the

transitional period from the first era to the second, dealt with bombed out cities. But themes of rebuilding, feeding Germany, and Allied unity were also present.

From information provided by Smithers and others, it can be concluded that these themes prevailed by design, springing from strict Allied film policy. Even the time to be allotted to the various topics was a subject of discussion in planning for each issue.

Prevailing Themes of the Informational Era

As *Welt im Film* entered into the Informational era, themes of rebuilding, of providing food to hungry Europeans, and of democracy at work were emphasized, and those dealing with punishment and of destruction were de-emphasized. Making the Germans feel guilty for the war and the devastation that resulted from their country's actions were maintained, but were secondary to the themes of rebuilding and providing food and clothing to those in need. Sports activities such as football and skiing also prevailed, and each issue contained such segments. Allied unity was also a prevailing theme during this period, although unity with the Soviet Union was emphasized less and less as the era wore on into early 1948.

Prevailing Themes of the Anti-Communist Propaganda Era

Segments emphasizing U.S. and British efforts to provide food, clothing and other necessities to the German people, along with rebuilding and economic development themes, were maintained during the Anti-Communist Propaganda era of *Welt im Film*, but were contrasted with Soviet Union activity, or lack of activity, in the eastern sector of the country under USSR control. Those elements had been incorporated into the series almost from the outset, or at least since August 1945, but

were now presented not only as U.S. and British goodwill endeavors, but as a means of illustrating the difference in the way the Western Allies were dealing with Germany and the way the Soviet Union was dealing with their World War II enemy.

The contrasts in *Welt im Film* are obvious. During the Berlin Airlift period, for example, from 24 June 1948 to 12 May 1949, an issue of the series began with a segment depicting factories and other facilities turning “lights out” because of a power shortage caused by the Soviet blockade of Berlin. Other problems, such as limitations on public transportation, were also emphasized and blamed directly on the blockade. But each segment depicting the problems brought about by the blockade was followed with one that illustrated the Western powers’ determination to overcome them. Segments showing the construction of new airfields, the arrival of U.S. and British aircraft at the rate of one every one and a half minutes, huge amounts of food and other supplies being unloaded, and coal mining for the production of electricity, all followed segments illustrating the hardships brought on by the blockade, and all were accompanied by such narration as “Berlin will not be a victim to the blockade,” and “the people who started the blockade were totally wrong in thinking they could kill Berlin.”

The Power of *Welt im Film* Propaganda

With all of the careful manipulation of *Welt im Film* material, with the complicated processes of approving segments for presentation, and with all the diligence that prevailed by Allied film officials in making sure just the right material was being presented in just the right way, it would appear that the Allies would reap benefits from the project. But the benefits are in doubt, because overall film propaganda value is in doubt. Researchers know now that there is no “magic bullet” or “hypodermic

needle," and that many factors are at play that negate, or at least minimize, any direct impact such propaganda endeavors may have on audiences.

But a consensus that film could actually mold the ideology of the masses had developed during the years following World War I; that the "magic bullet" could be fired from the projector, and that those watching would be at its mercy. This consensus remained remarkably durable during and following World War II.

Thus there can be no doubt that the First World War represented a singularly important moment in the wider history of film propaganda. The nature and extent of the war created an unprecedented need for belligerent governments to win popular support for their war efforts, and it was cinema's apparent ability to reach those mass audiences that made it seem such an attractive weapon in this battle for the hearts and minds of ordinary people. But, not least because of the subsequent history of film propaganda, the all-important question remains: did the weapon work? Did it reach its target and did it then make the desired impact on that target?...⁸

There is evidence that film propaganda presented to British audiences at the beginning of the First World War simply mirrored the attitude of the public at the time, and that film propagandists found it harder and harder to find an accepting audience for their presentations as the public mood began to change.⁹

In reality, growing popular weariness and anger were the product both of a changing war situation that was increasingly characterized by higher casualties and apparent stalemate and of a changing domestic situation in which ever heavier burdens were imposed in ways that were increasingly seen to be unfair. Set alongside developments of this significance, the official films played an increasingly minor role in the wartime experience. Equally, in the final months of the war, dramatic changes at the front (with Germany apparently poised to defeat Britain) and important changes at

home (with new government policies to remedy the unfairness of the domestic burdens of the war) were able to achieve what the films never could -- they dissipated the weariness and redirected the anger, and the nation consequently united once more in its hatred of the enemy and its determination to see the war through to a victorious conclusion. In short, in all of this, the official films played very little, if any, part. For while the propagandist believed that film propaganda played a key part in its battle to win and retain the hearts and minds of the people, this does not in itself mean that it did. In fact, while the nature of the history of propaganda is such that we can never be entirely sure, in this particular case, the power of film propaganda does seem to have been more mythical than real.¹⁰

From this, one may conclude that the power of *Welt im Film* was likely more mythical than real, and that changing conditions and everyday situations had a much greater influence on the citizens of Germany than any film propaganda effort could ever have. Propaganda techniques were employed in *Welt im Film* by Allied officials simply because it was believed at the time that they worked. But in the end, a realistic presentation of events, without the process of deliberate "manipulation of representations," would likely have better served the Western Allies in convincing the Germans that they were wrong in their World War II endeavors, that the Allies were willing to help feed and cloth the Germans and help them rebuilt their devastated country, and that democracy is better than communism. If all of these things were, indeed, true, then reality would be enough to convince the Germans. The need to manipulate that reality would not be necessary.

Endnotes

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