

**DOCUMENTING NAZI ATROCITIES -  
EARLY FILMS ON THE LIBERATION OF THE CAMPS**  
FRI 8 MAY – FRI 12 JUNE 2015



*Henri Cartier-Bresson. Le Retour (The Return), France 1945/46*

To commemorate 70 years since the end of the Second World War, the Goethe-Institut London is showing a series of films documenting the liberation of the Nazi camps.

Straight after the war, the Allied programme of ‘re-education’ aimed to confront the German population with its responsibility for the rise of National Socialism and its extermination policies. Moving images played an important role in this process.

The Goethe-Institut is running four film programmes with contributions from the four Allied Powers. The films were made between 1944 and 1946. Rarely seen and some translated into English for the first time, they bear witness to the atrocities committed against Jews, Roma and Sinti and other groups declared as ‘undesirable’ by the Nazis.

Two additional programmes include later works by filmmakers such as Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, Harun Farocki and Emil Weiss, who take a more personal view and stand out for their new approaches to representing the camps.

The series is accompanied by discussions with historians and film experts on those early productions and how they were reworked as archive footage, also bringing this history up to date by reflecting on how we depict violence and atrocities today.

Curated by film historian Thomas Tode.

***In collaboration with IWM London (Imperial War Museums), the University of Essex, Queen Mary, University of London, and the Institut français du Royaume-Uni.***

## VENUE AND TICKETS

**Goethe-Institut London**, 50 Princes Gate, Exhibition Rd, London SW7 2PH

**Box Office:** 020 7596 4000; **Tickets:** £3, free for Goethe-Institut language students and library members; booking essential

**For the programme 'The French Contribution' only:**

**Ciné lumière**, 17 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2DT

**Box Office:** 020 7871 3515; **Tickets:** £10 full price, £8 conc.

## OVERVIEW

- **THE US AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION**  
FRI 8 MAY 7PM
- **THE SOVIET CONTRIBUTION**  
SAT 9 MAY 6PM
- **THE BRITISH CONTRIBUTION**  
THU 14 MAY 7PM
- **THE FRENCH CONTRIBUTION**  
THU 4 JUNE 6.30PM
- **THE 'OTHER', PERSONAL FILM ABOUT THE CAMPS I**  
DATE TBC
- **THE 'OTHER', PERSONAL FILM ABOUT THE CAMPS II**  
WED 3 JUN 7PM
- **DOCUMENTING NAZI ATROCITIES PANEL DISCUSSION**  
FRI 5 JUN 7PM
- **ADDITIONAL FILM SCREENING & PANEL DISCUSSION**  
WEEK STARTING 8 JUNE

## DETAILED PROGRAMME BELOW

For more information, please go to [www.goethe.de/london](http://www.goethe.de/london)

[www.facebook.com/goethe.institut.london](https://www.facebook.com/goethe.institut.london)

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## THE US AMERICAN CONTRIBUTION

FRI 8 MAY 7PM, GOETHE-INSTITUT

### **Germany Awake! (Deutschland Erwache!),**

**Germany / USA 1945, 23 mins, produced by the US-Signal Corps.**

Commissioned by General Eisenhower in May 1945 and filmed by the US-Signal Corps, this film was shown to German prisoners of war for the purpose of re-education from September 1945 onwards. Made with a high degree of integrity, it is direct and unsparing in the way it addresses the viewer: "We know that there are men among you that want to tell us today that they had never been Nazis, but who in reality never changed and still hold on to Hitler's theories to this day."

### **Welt im Film Nr 5 (World in Film No 5), UK / USA 1945, 20 mins.**



One of the earliest editions of the British-American newsreel series *Welt im Film* produced to support denazification in Germany and in Austria, it was first shown on 15 June 1945. It is also one of the first films to exclusively deal with the camps, documenting 13 altogether, including some that had been liberated by the Red Army. It rigorously proceeds from one camp to the next, announcing each with its name appearing across an image.

### **Death Mills (Die Todesmühlen), USA 1945/46, 22 mins, directed by Hanus Burger.**

Billy Wilder supervised the production of this film directed by Hanus Burger. In a final scene it shows the inhabitants of Weimar who, ordered by the American authorities, visit the concentration camp in Buchenwald. From their reactions of horror and disgust the film crossfades to enthusiastic Nazis raising their arms in the Nazi salute at party rallies and in the streets. Though the film alleges to include victim groups, it omits homosexuals as well as Sinti and Roma. It was shown in the American zone from January 1946 onwards. During the week that it was screened, the cinemas offered no other programmes. Later it was also shown in the British zone.

### **Concentration Camp Ebensee, Austria, USA, 8 May 1945, 10 mins, unedited footage..**

This short silent film juxtaposes the terrible conditions in the Austrian camp Ebensee, near Bad Ischl, and the idyllic mountain and lakes surrounding it: picturesque shots of the Salzkammergut contrast with images of bodies in the crematorium and of the weakened survivors supported by other camp inmates. Sidney Bernstein, the head of the Allied German Atrocity Film project, had given the instruction to always film the camps in the context of their surroundings, to document the vicinity and the nearby towns as well as to record details such as the company plates on the crematorium ovens and other installations.

Total Running Time: 75 minutes

**Introduced by the series curator Thomas Tode and followed by a Q&A.**

**THE SOVIET CONTRIBUTION**  
SAT 9 MAY 6PM, GOETHE-INSTITUT

**Majdanek - Cmentarzysko Europy (Majdanek - The Cemetery of Europe),  
Poland 1944, b/w, 35mm, ca. 21 mins, directed by Aleksander Ford and Jerzy Bossak.**



The Majdanek concentration camp, near Lublin, Eastern Poland, was already liberated in June 1944. This is the first film about a concentration camp to be jointly produced by Soviet and Polish filmmakers. As historian Jeremy Hicks has recently shown, the motifs in the film, such as family photos of relatives, are a “response” of sorts to the Nazi film *Im Wald von Katyn* (*In Katyn Forest*, Germany 1943, dir. Fritz Hippler), which, in the context of the propaganda war, had previously accused the Soviets of committing atrocities against Polish officers. (There is a Soviet and a Polish version of this film, the latter mentioning the Katyn massacre.)

**Oswenzim (Auschwitz; Polish title: Oswiecim),  
Soviet Union 1945, 21 mins, directed by Jelisaweta Swilowa.**

One of the most experienced editors in Russia at the time and the wife of Dziga Vertov, Jelisaweta Switlowa documented the notorious extermination camp which was liberated by the Soviet army in January 1945. The film clearly tries to treat the survivors as individuals and with respect: they are always introduced by their names and are shown wearing civilian clothes. The film includes particularly shocking images of twins who had been used for human experiments and are seen pulling up their sleeves in front of the camera to reveal their KZ identification numbers. Because of its emotional power this scene has become canonized and has reappeared in many Holocaust films.

**Todeslager Sachsenhausen (Death Camp Sachsenhausen)  
Germany / Soviet Union 1946, 35 mins, directed by Richard Brandt.**

Produced by a German team led by Richard Brandt for the Soviet Military Administration of the Soviet occupation zone, this is, strictly speaking, not a Soviet production. It had no equivalent in the western zones, where no films about the camps had been made by German filmmakers. While none of the Allied atrocity films had listed Germans among the victim groups, this includes Germans who had been active in the resistance against the Nazi regime. It thus contributes to making them part of the founding myth of the GDR.

Total running time: 77 minutes

**Introduced by Dr Jeremy Hicks, Dept. of Russian, Queen Mary, Univ. of London, and followed by a discussion also joined by Professor Rainer Schulze, Dept. of History, Univ. of Essex, and series curator Thomas Tode.**

## THE BRITISH CONTRIBUTION

THU 14 MAY 7PM, GOETHE-INSTITUT

### **British Movietone News, No 830, UK 1945, excerpt: 6 mins.**



This six-minute excerpt from a newsreel of 30 April 1945 entitled "Atrocities - The Evidence" shows a British delegation of ten members of Parliament visiting the concentration camp in Buchenwald. It includes footage and direct sound of the American congresswoman Clare Booth Luce addressing the camera and describing what she has seen in the camp. The film was immediately shown in cinemas of the occupied zone (even before *Welt im Film No 5*). In May 1945 the inhabitants of the "Village of Hate", Belsen, were asked to watch the 313 seconds of the

film voluntarily. When this did not happen, the British army ordered the whole population to gather on 30 May 1945. 4000 people, accompanied by soldiers, were walked through their town to watch this newsreel. Such enforced viewings only took place in individual cases.

### **Belsen Camp Evidence Film, UK 1945, 20 mins.**

This film was screened during the Belsen Trial in Lüneburg on 20 September 1945. It is probably the first time in the western occupation zones that film images are used as evidence in a war crimes trial: "Colonel Blackhouse - With the permission of the Court, I propose next to show the film of the scenes which were found at Belsen. The film is in two parts, the first showing the general conditions and the second showing the S.S. and the conditions in more detail, together with the persons who were found there. The first part of the film is technically bad owing to the appalling weather conditions at the time it was taken." (War Crimes Trials - Vol. II The Belsen Trial. 'The Trial of Josef Kramer and Forty Four Others', [www.bergenbelsen.co.uk](http://www.bergenbelsen.co.uk))

### **German Concentration Camp Factual Survey**

**UK 1945/2014, 72 mins, Directed and edited by Stewart McAllister and Peter Tanner.**



The footage of the liberation of Nazi concentration and death camps filmed by Allied cameramen was initially going to be used for a joint British-American film. But disagreement over the purpose, aesthetics, and effect of the planned 'atrocities film' led to the Americans abandoning the project on 9 July 1945. Stewart McAllister, perhaps the most talented British editor of his time, has to be regarded as the actual author of the film. Alfred Hitchcock, who is often associated with the film, briefly worked as its artistic supervisor. Only the strict structure of the film and

the use of animated maps can possibly be attributed to him. The editing of the film was completed in September 1945, but due to political reservations it was never circulated. The film was restored by IWM London (Imperial War Museums London) and first shown at the Berlinale in 2014.

Total Running Time: 96 minutes

**Introduced by Dr Toby Haggith, Senior Curator, Imperial War Museum, and director of the restoration Project, and followed by a Q & A, also joined by Professor Rainer Schulze, Univ. of Essex.**

## THE 'OTHER', PERSONAL FILM ABOUT THE CAMPS I

DATE TO BE CONFIRMED, GOETHE-INSTITUT

### **Aufschub (Respite), Germany 2007, 37 mins, directed by Harun Farocki.**



Harun Farocki's film shows historical footage of the Dutch "transit camp Westerbork" from 1944: people working in the laundry and in the fields, dancing, getting onto trains and helping to close the doors. Farocki inserted intertitles and edited this footage to create counterpoints of reflection to question the images where they conceal something.

### **Falkenau the Impossible – Samuel Fuller Bears Witness**

**France / USA 1988, 52 mins, directed by Emil Weiss.**



In May 1945 the 1st Infantry division of the US Army, the "Big Red One", liberated a camp in the Bohemian town of Falkenau and found thousands of dead prisoners. It apparently was "Stalag 359 Falkenau", a prisoner of war camp run by the Wehrmacht. Samuel Fuller, the future Hollywood director, was among the GIs arriving at the camp. Ordered by his commanding officer, he filmed the liberation with his private 16mm camera. Emil Weiss took Fuller back to Falkenau in 1988 to recall his experiences on location. The original footage (ca. 21 minutes) was

integrated into his narration. He comments on the material in a remarkable way and offers a reflection on filmmaking in extreme situations. Weiss' film shows how such footage can be presented in a responsible and personal way.

Total Running Time: 89 minutes

**Introduction to be confirmed.**

## THE 'OTHER', PERSONAL FILM ABOUT THE CAMPS II

WED 3 JUNE 7PM, GOETHE-INSTITUT

### **Le Retour (The Return), France 1945/46, 36 mins, directed by Henri Cartier-Bresson.**



“One of the most moving documents of human agony and joy to emerge from World War II”, *Le Retour* follows the liberation and homeward journey of French prisoners from Nazi concentration camps from April to June 1945\*. From their disbelieving, sunken faces to the hospital recoveries and finally to their journey home by foot, truck, and plane, the camera captures their profound expressions of fear, anticipation and bliss. Confrontations at the border checks, the US airlift over France, and the tentative smiles on the men's faces as they arrive by train and watch for familiar faces are rendered unforgettably by Cartier-Bresson's adroit

camera. By concentrating on this single event, he has said more about the separation and destruction of war than hours of combat footage. “In the face of great catastrophe and human tragedy”, says film historian Richard Barsam, “the artist is often mute; in reflection he finds that simplicity is the only technique by which to capture the magnitude of the events before him. Cartier-Bresson is such an artist”. Circulating Film Library Catalog, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 1984 (\*The dates in the MoMa catalogue entry “August to October 1945” are incorrect. This synopsis states the correct dates.)

### **Reunion, USA 1946, 21 mins, directed by Peter F. Elgar.**

On the basis of Henri Cartier-Bresson's film *Le Retour*, Peter F. Elgar created this abbreviated American version with a new text and new sound for the purposes of the US Army Pictorial Service.

### **Sonst ist auch das Ende verdorben [Otherwise the end is also spoilt]**

#### **Germany 1989, 18 mins, directed by Gerd Roscher and Barbara Kusenberg.**

The film is a collage about the end of the war in Hamburg and northern Germany compiled from amateur footage and archive material by the Film Unit of the 6th British Army. The film includes one of the few synch sound recordings of the voices of the victims: When arrested concentration camp guards walk by one hears the survivors shout at them in rage: “Genug Gefressen!” (“Gorged yourselves enough!”). Among the amateur footage there are scenes of the Nazi opponent and hobby filmmaker Johannes Wagner returning home on a bicycle, wearing prison clothes after spending years in a concentration camp, celebrating with his friends, drinking and dancing – the joy of one that got away.

Total Running Time: 73 minutes

**Introduced by the series curator Thomas Tode and followed by a Q&A with Thomas Tode and Sylvie Lindeperg, University of Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne.**

## THE FRENCH CONTRIBUTION

THU 4 JUNE 6.30PM, CINÉ LUMIÈRE, INSTITUT FRANÇAIS

### **Les Camps de la mort (Death Camps), France 1945, 20 mins.**



Filmed by cameramen working for the French newsreel “France Libre Actualités”, including René Persin and Félix Forestier, the film was initially only meant to be shown in France and was not made for cinema distribution. It was included in the exhibition “Les Crimes Hitlériens”, which opened on 10 June 1945 in Paris and then toured through many French cities. In the exhibition the screening of the film was embedded in the reports of French deportees. From November 1945, the film was also shown in the context of “Rééducation” in the French occupation zone in Germany and in Austria as part of the compilation *Lager des Grauens*

[Camp of Horror] (Austria 1945). Unlike many other films about the camps, this film does not use any music.

### **Nuit et brouillard (Night and Fog), France 1955/56, 32 mins, directed by Alain Resnais.**



Resnais’ “solemn and terrible elegy” (*The Times*, 1956) is one of the most important films about the system of the camps. It was made ten years after the Allied films, which had not yet mentioned the central function of “selection” on arrival at the camps. Combining archive footage of the liberation of the camps and newly filmed material in colour, the film also addresses the problem of remembering and forgetting.

### **Henchman Gance, France 2010, 33 min, directed by Chris Marker.**

During the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961, the American director Leo Hurwitz, who was documenting the trial for Israeli television, also filmed Eichmann watching Alain Resnais’ film *Nuit et brouillard* (France, 1956): the first time the war criminal was confronted with images from the camps. Hurwitz focuses his camera on Eichmann’s gaze. Almost five decades later, Chris Marker, who had worked on the film by Resnais, made new use of Hurwitz’s footage, inserting the exact countershots from *Nuit et brouillard* that Eichmann would have seen. This was Marker’s response to the media debate over the digital and other manipulation of the Eichmann trial footage by Eyal Sivan in the film *Un spécialiste, portrait d'un criminel moderne* (France, 1999).

Total Running Time: 85 minutes

**Introduced by Professor Sylvie Lindeperg, University of Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, and followed by a Q&A.**

*Please note that this programme will be shown at Ciné lumière.*