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Editor: Eva M Shin

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Editorial contact: [editorial@theschola.org](mailto:editorial@theschola.org)

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Tinseltown in the Third Reich:  
The Big Screen amid War and Genocide

*Sophia DeSouza '21*  
BASIS Scottsdale  
Arizona, USA

## **Tinseltown in the Third Reich: The Big Screen amid War and Genocide**

*Sophia DeSouza '21*  
BASIS Scottsdale  
Arizona, USA

### **Abstract**

In the Third Reich, films offered Adolf Hitler an allure that represented the potential for Germany's future indoctrination and mesmerization with Nazism masquerading as a fine art. The film industry began to develop in Germany's very own Tinseltown, Babelsberg, surrounded by World War II and the Holocaust. In *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse* (1933), Fritz Lang reveals the Nazis' criminal plans and their insatiable appetite for domination through a character parodying Hitler who is powerful through his puppeteering and anonymity. In Hans Steinhoff's *Hitlerjunge Quex* (1933), the Hitler Youth indoctrinates a child with the existential fear of Jewish Bolshevism, highlighting the themes of nationalism, class, communist inferiority, and child-like innocence. In *Der Ewige Jude* (1940), Fritz Hippler justifies the ghettoization of Poland and the "Final Solution" by depicting Jews as parasitic through the juxtaposition of Aryans and Jews, a perversion of footage, and an omniscient third-person narrator in a pseudo-documentary. In Veit Harlan's *Kolberg* (1945), the themes of Führerprinzip, nationalism, and religion are shown by falsifying the titular historical event to improve morale, represent Hitler and Germany's hopeful win, and be the miracle that would save the Third Reich from its defeat.

### **Introduction**

What is the role of film in society? The film reflects the past, and present, and tries to predict the future. Its visuality of it makes it a powerful vehicle for communication across various audiences. In the

Third Reich, the film offered Adolf Hitler an allure that represented his admiration and competition with the U.S. and Hollywood and potential that echoed his desire for Germany's future indoctrination and mesmerization with Nazism masquerading as fine art. To the Nazis, the film was the vessel that carried the odium for the Weimar Republic and the hope of what a racially pure society would look like. As the Nazis took advantage of the film industry, directors who feared Hitler's rise to power began producing motion pictures that subtly conveyed the descent into evil into which Germany was soon headed. With the influx of Nazi movies, the big screen began to develop in Germany's very own Tinseltown – Babelsberg – surrounded by World War II and the Holocaust. I will analyze how Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda Joseph Goebbels' philosophy of propaganda and censorship and how the crucial pieces of Nazi ideology (nationalism and racism, perseverance for global domination, and hatred for Jewish Bolshevism) are epitomized in the following films with three being produced by Nazis and one by an anti-Nazi: *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (1933), *Hitler Youth Quex* (1933), *The Eternal Jew* (1940), and *Kolberg* (1945).

### **The Beginning - 1933 Films**

#### *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*

Fritz Lang, an émigré who mastered the art of Expressionist films, directed the science-fiction drama *Metropolis* (1927) and the thriller *M* (1931). These films represented the darkness of Weimar culture and post-war melancholia. In 1933, Lang directed a film with similar tones called *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* with an emphasis on the titular Hitler-like character. The character of Dr. Mabuse was created by Norbert Jacques in his novel *Dr. Mabuse, der Spieler* (1921).<sup>1</sup> The villain became a representation of the cultural zeitgeist of the 1920s as he was the incarnation of war trauma, economic worries, and fears of Weimar's instability.

In *The Testament*, Mabuse is the source of distress for many of the characters but sits in an asylum cell for much of the film. He is an evil genius who became insane years ago and is now being studied. Mabuse spends most of his time writing what is perceived to be criminal plans to be put into action by his henchmen, analogous to Hitler's orchestration of the government, including the Reich Cabinet Ministries and the military. At the end of the movie, it is revealed that all the death threats announced came from a speaker behind a curtain – symbolizing

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<sup>1</sup> *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, directed by Fritz Lange (Nero-Film AG, 1933), <https://youtu.be/cZ50CKM9DjA>.

Mabuse's manipulation, control, and power. All these characteristics are shared by Hitler except while Mabuse was menacing and hidden, Hitler was menacing in the spotlight.

Inspector Lohmann is in charge of keeping order and his kindness and altruism exemplified in his scenes craft him into the perfect whole.<sup>2</sup> Contrarily, the Doctor is purposely filmed in a disorganized fashion with visual and aural components that occasionally coalesce but never create a single subject. Also, his scattered commands interrupt the typical cinematic experience thereby fueling irritation from the audience directed at the villain. The film also ends unconventionally. Although it looks like a typical detective story, it ends in an unsatisfying and unfinished mystery.<sup>3</sup> The clues along the way point toward a clear-cut ending, but the enigma of Dr. Mabuse is left unsolved.

This story about "The Man Behind the Curtain" showcases an anonymous force puppeteering a system of crime. Mabuse's puppeteering is reminiscent of Hitler's, although Lang intended the Doctor to be a parody of Hitler – Mabuse is threatening through his anonymity and invisibility, not his charisma and charm. Mabuse's mission from the beginning has been to achieve global domination similar to Hitler's during his rise to become Chancellor. Since the Doctor is practically nonexistent in each version of the story, his absence shows that there are economic, media, and political structures already in play that enables complicity in evil.<sup>4</sup>

This film was banned by Goebbels to preserve the perception of Hitler because according to Lang, it put "the slogans and beliefs of the Third Reich in the mouths of criminals."<sup>5</sup> The allegorical meaning of the film is the terror of the Nazis and their insatiable desire for destruction. This film was released at the beginning of the Third Reich, but it foreshadowed the havoc soon to be endured and the villainy soon to be exemplified by the Nazis.

### *Hitlerjunge Quex*

The innocence of childhood is often seen as a promising sign by older generations seeking hope in a world stained by the devastation. In Hans Steinhoff's *Hitler Youth Quex*, the Nazis deprive a child of his

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<sup>2</sup> Erik Butler, "Dr. Mabuse: Terror and Deception of the Image," *The German Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (2005): 487. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30039451>.

<sup>3</sup> Butler, "Dr. Mabuse: Terror," 488.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 493.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Koller, "The Testament of Dr. Mabuse," *Sense of Cinema*, April 2004, [https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2004/cteq/testament\\_dr\\_mabuse/](https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2004/cteq/testament_dr_mabuse/).

innocence and Bolshevik sub-humanity and indoctrinate him into an ideology that made him completely unaware of its evils.

The film – produced by the notorious company UFA, which was responsible for many other Nazi propaganda films – received approval from Goebbels, who admired the story because it helped form the aesthetic of National Socialism.<sup>6</sup> *Hitler Youth* was based on the real-life story of a boy who escaped the misery of his hometown to join the Hitler Youth (HJ) but was later killed by communists while distributing pamphlets for a Nazi rally. Goebbels used his death as a cry to take vengeance against the communists and to crown him a child martyr.<sup>7</sup>

The communist-turned-HJ boy is named Heini Völker – nicknamed Quex and his communist father’s abuse is not inherent but a result of the miseries of the social and economic system that plagues Germany.<sup>8</sup> He is overweight and unemployed – typical characteristics of Jews and communists in Nazi propaganda. When Mutter Völker receives news of a death threat pointed towards her and Heini from a communist, she becomes so tormented that she decides to kill herself and Heini. The mother – malnourished and pale – lives for her son and her son only, echoing the archetype of the “desperate mother” – reminiscent of a passion play.<sup>9</sup> This lets the Nazis paint Heini and his sacrifice being similar to that of Jesus, which makes it easy for the audience to glorify him. In addition, the family’s surname is ‘Völker’, which contains the word ‘Völk’, thereby making the family represent all of Germany and bringing up the idea of Volksgemeinschaft to the viewer. The communists sing about justice but commit crimes, reflecting Nazism’s idea that they work for the betterment of the USSR and its domination, not for Germany or the Völk.<sup>10</sup> These sentiments are reiterated in the Bannführer and Heini’s father’s conversation:

Bannführer Kaß: Where were you born?

Vater Völker: In Berlin.

Bannführer: Where is Berlin located?

Völker: On the Spree River.

Bannführer: On the Spree. That’s right! But where? In which country?

Völker: Well, in Germany, of course.

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<sup>6</sup> Jay W. Baird, “From Berlin to Neubabelsberg: Nazi Film Propaganda and Hitler Youth Quex,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 18, no. 3 (1983): 496.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/260548>.

<sup>7</sup> Baird, “From Berlin to Neubabelsberg,” 501.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 505.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 504.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 506.

Bannführer: That's it. In Germany. In Germany. Think about it.<sup>11</sup>

This exchange claims that if one is truly German, the only logical political affiliation one should have is with the Nazis. This stresses the propagandistic idea that the Nazis must serve the people to reach “national salvation”.

*Hitler Youth Quex* reinforces the classic Nazi propagandistic theme of “Us v. Them” with a main character who is the poster child of an HJ member. Heini embodies the critical Nazi concept that states that one needs to always be ready for war and sacrifice. The film contrasts Nazi superiority, exemplified through their pure behaviors, and Bolshevik sub-humanity, shown through their detestable and hypocritical actions.

### **The Middle - 1940 Films**

#### *Der Ewige Jude*

The Nazis' genocidal plan toward “national salvation” was termed “The Final Solution to the Jewish Question” and consisted of several stages of atrocious policies. One of the stages was the establishment of ghettos to further dehumanize Jews and segregate them from Germans. The Łódź ghetto, where 230,000 Jews lived, was established in 1940 and meant to be a temporary place for Jews before they were sent to death camps. In Fritz Hippler's *The Eternal Jew*, the Nazis justify the segregation between healthy Aryans and parasitic Jews as well as the occupation of Poland through a series of archival footage claimed to be a “true documentary”.

In *The Eternal Jew*, there are numerous anti-Semitic stereotypes to further Jewish people's existence from that of Germans. The most prominent stereotype is Jews are depicted as primitive and exploitative. This part of the film shows the unsanitary living conditions inside ghettos, emphasizing the presence of overcrowding and rats. The narrator uses pseudo-scientific language like “host civilizations” and “parasites” to describe Jews' intrinsic nature to exploit Aryans.<sup>12</sup> These anti-Semitic statements show that Jews' unscrupulous essence may not be seen at the surface-level, but needs careful training to learn. The movie also focuses on teaching the viewer how to recognize Jewish

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<sup>11</sup> *Hitlerjunge Quex*, directed by Hans Steinhoff (UFA GmbH, 1933), <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7p08kk>.

<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Hansen, “The Art and Science of Reading Faces: Strategies of Racist Cinema in the Third Reich,” *Shofar* 28, no. 1 (2009): 87. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5703/shofar.28.1.80>.



characteristics. The narrator says that the vilest act a Jew can commit is assimilation, which veils their criminality and is a tactic of domination. For example, the film uses the dissolve effect to show images of traditional-looking Jews dissolving into “Western” or assimilated-looking Jews.<sup>13</sup> This helps unmask the Jew giving the viewer a “behind-the-scenes glimpse at [their] trickery in action”.<sup>14</sup> With an instructional tone, the film emphasizes the key Nazi doctrine that seeing is knowing.<sup>15</sup> The all-knowing, third-person narrator mimics the “voice of God” and makes the voiceover seem perfect, powerful, and free of question.<sup>16</sup> This indoctrinates the viewer and encourages them to draw their own anti-Semitic beliefs.

The film was advertised to the public as being authentic and deriving real footage from the Łódź ghetto, however, it becomes obvious that the film is a distortion of reality. It altered reality in its use of clips from *The House of Rothschild* (1934), an American film about the Rothschild family, a wealthy Jewish family who became affluent through banking in the 1700s. In these scenes, *Rothschild* clips’ context is mistranslated to serve an anti-Semitic agenda. For example, the film portrays Rothschild hiding money from the tax collector, but what is unknown to the audience is that Jewish families were forced to hide their wealth because they were taxed more heavily than Gentiles.<sup>17</sup> Footage from other films along with montages of Jewish celebrations is coupled with excessive and detailed narration to prevent the reader from “misinterpreting” the clips. During the Purim celebration, the narrator leaves nothing to the imagination of the viewer and argues that the holiday commemorates the Jews’ craving for vengeance.<sup>18</sup> Not only does this let the viewer adopt an ideology that encourages the taking of things at face value, but also infects a population with anti-Semitism that has a trajectory toward genocide. The enticement for this film was its supposed use of real footage of Jewish people’s daily lives. Fritz Hippler, the director, claimed that no Jews were aware that they were being filmed and that the crew captured them in an unprejudiced manner because of their unawareness of cameras.<sup>19</sup> This kind of ill-treatment toward Jews strengthens one of the main tactics of the film: to present Germans with an unfiltered, raw look at how Jews are corrupt using an educational and enlightening tone. The film ends on a similar tone but

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<sup>13</sup> *Der Ewige Jude*, directed by Fritz Hippler (Deutsche Filmherstellungs- und Verwertungs- GmbH, 1940), <https://archive.org/details/DerEwigeJude>.

<sup>14</sup> Hansen, “The Art and Science,” 86.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

also features optimistic music. The end juxtaposes the disappearance of Jewish faces (seen in the beginning) with the appearance of Aryan ones.<sup>20</sup> This disturbing change prompts the audience to learn more about the National Socialist cause and foreshadows the Holocaust and the “Final Solution.”

Five years after the death of Goebbels, the article “Goebbels’ Principles of Propaganda” was written by Leonard W. Doob and uncovers both the published and unpublished parts of Goebbels’ diary that specifically relate to his ideals about propaganda. Goebbels’ philosophy provides significant context for the content of Nazi movies. One of his principles is: Propaganda should provide a channel for aggression and thus specify targets for hatred.<sup>21</sup> The targets most often used were Jews and the conspiracy theory of Jewish Bolshevism. To solidify the “Us v. Them” trope, the enemy needed to be defined by characteristics that were un- or anti-German. Germans were considered fit, superior, and Herrenmenschen, so Jews and communists needed to be depicted as degenerate, overweight, and vermin-like. This kind of propaganda used multiple psychological concepts. For example, apophenia can be seen when people were conditioned to see unpleasantness in Jews depicted in propaganda, and this eventually transferred into real life, where unpleasantness was detected in the Jewish population when none was present. *The Eternal Jew* provides the perfect vehicle for hatred against the enemy because it depicts Jews as people deserving of abuse.

In *The Eternal Jew*, the Nazis depict Jews as inferior through the use of an Aryan/Jewish juxtaposition, a manipulation of prior footage, and an omniscient narrator. The film’s advertisement as an authentic documentary indoctrinated Germans into a genocidal version of anti-Semitism and justified the ghettoization of Poland.

## The End – 1945 Films

*Kolberg*

With their intrinsic fitness, intelligence, and racial superiority, why did the Nazis think losing WWII was even an option? After the Battle of Berlin, the Soviets surrounded German troops eventually leading to the destruction of Berlin, the collapse of the Third Reich, and the suicide of Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, Goebbels, and Hermann Goring. A few months before the battle, Goebbels realized Germans’

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>21</sup> Leonard W. Doob, “Goebbels’ Principles of Propaganda,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 14, no. 3 (1950): 440. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2745999>.

spirits were low and morale needed to be boosted if they wanted to resist the Allies. Consequently, *Kolberg*, the Nazi version of “Uncle Sam” propaganda, was released and analogizes the Germans’ defense of Kolberg, Pomerania against the French during the Napoleonic Wars to the Nazis’ hopeful, future win against the Allies. The film incorporates the themes of Führerprinzip, nationalism, and religion.

Another principle of Goebbels’ propaganda was: “Propaganda cannot immediately affect strong countertendencies; instead, it must offer some form of action or diversion or both.”<sup>22</sup> Regarding propaganda strategy and objectives, Goebbels distinguished between Haltung (conduct) and Stimmung (spirit). After a raid on a German town, he claimed that Haltung was amazing but Stimmung was poor.<sup>23</sup> He realized Stimmung could be more easily affected by propaganda while Haltung needed to be stable at all times, otherwise, the Nazis would lose support. Before Germany’s situation worsened and Goebbels ignored Stimmung altogether, he focused on raising German morale through film.

The film begins in 1813. During the siege, Kolberg’s commander did not want to use civilians to defend the town, as suggested by Mayor Nettelbeck.<sup>24</sup> Nettelbeck lobbied for new military leadership and in turn received Major Gneisenau. Gneisenau arrived in Kolberg and allowed the townspeople to fight.<sup>25</sup> Eventually, Prussia surrendered and the siege ended.<sup>26</sup> Goebbels understood that if he told the movie this way, Germans would become disheartened and abandon the war cause. Accordingly, he altered the ending to tell: the massive civilian and military resistance ended the battle, leaving Kolberg a part of Prussia. The underdogs came out of the siege reigning victorious and laid out the perfect plot for a propaganda film.

Führerprinzip, the principle of forceful leadership, is exemplified in the film through the townspeople’s obedience and sacrifice for the defense. The citizens listen to the officers and organize a militia for the betterment of their nation and to defeat an enemy whose sole mission is annihilation. The themes of self-defense, citizen soldiers, and enemy war aim to typify Nazi ideology.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the score for

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<sup>22</sup> Doob, “Goebbels’ Principles,” 440.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 441.

<sup>24</sup> David Culbert, “Kolberg: Goebbels’ Wunderwaffe as Counterfactual History,” *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 35, no. 2 (2009): 126. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41403666>.

<sup>25</sup> Culbert, “Kolberg: Goebbels’ Wunderwaffe,” 126.

<sup>26</sup> Erwin Leiser, *Nazi Cinema* (Macmillan, 1974), 125.

<sup>27</sup> Culbert, “Kolberg: Goebbels’ Wunderwaffe,” 126.

the movie, arranged by Norbert Schultze, helps encourage nationalism and is composed of military march music, folk melodies, and classical sonatas.<sup>28</sup> Inspired by Goebbels' *Totalenkrieg* speech, Schultze played a patriotic melody during the villagers' fight with the French.<sup>29</sup> Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" is played during the New Year's Eve festivities, evoking feelings of German pride and creating a peaceful mood.<sup>30</sup> These scenes epitomize Nazism's claim of supremacy and the idea that Germans have magnificence running through their blood tracing back to their ancestors – combining ideas of nationalism and racism. The inclusion of "Moonlight Sonata" also reminds the viewer that with the Nazis in charge, chaos will end and peace and 'national salvation' will return.

The Nazis weaponized and perverted religious ideas in many propaganda materials and *Kolberg* is no different. Organized Christianity represented in the film is used to inspire the townspeople via familiar chorale towns defending the Marienkirche, the main church in Kolberg.<sup>31</sup> Also, during the New Year's Eve celebration, Maria, Nettelbeck's messenger, is seen lighting the Christmas tree. This scene marries her angelic, maidenly character, her name evocative of the Virgin Mary, and the traditions of Christianity. Her character can also encourage girls in the audience to join the Bund Deutscher Mädel.

*Kolberg* was the most expensive motion picture produced in Germany during the time of its release, featured real soldiers during battle scenes, and was directed by Veit Harlan, the leading director for Nazi films, so how did it commercially fail? The movie was only seen by a fraction of viewers, because Germans had more important duties to fulfill, and Goebbels' interference with production and his difficult relationship with Harlan led to the film's unexpected result at the box office. Goebbels described the film to Hitler as being "a first-rate political masterpiece", but did not attend either of the film's premieres in Berlin.<sup>32</sup> Doubts about how little the film could do in reversing the decreasing German morale and the country's inexorable vanquishment enveloped Goebbels.

The falsified history, propagandistic themes, and Nazi ideology depicted in *Kolberg* were meant to bolster support before Germany's

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<sup>28</sup> Culbert, "Kolberg: Goebbels' Wunderwaffe," 134.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> *Kolberg*, directed by Veit Harlan (UFA GmbH, 1945), [https://youtu.be/EQL\\_fxASbYw](https://youtu.be/EQL_fxASbYw).

<sup>31</sup> Culbert, "Kolberg: Goebbels' Wunderwaffe," 126.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 131.

inevitable defeat in 1945. However, it failed and only a small number of Germans watched the movie. Nazi Germany's loss in WWII was inescapable and this film was too ambitious, trying to be the miracle that would save Germany from its fate.

### **How the Nazis' Motion Picture Hypnotized Germans**

The Nazis' serpentine and sophisticated system of propaganda took advantage of the innovations of the twentieth century, like the motion picture. The Reich's Department of Film was especially important because of Goebbels' cosmic attraction to cinema. In his diary, one of his principles stated: Propaganda must be disseminated via a captivating medium to capture the interests of the audience.<sup>33</sup> The Minister believed motion pictures were especially effective because they provide entertaining plots that manipulate tension and simultaneously indoctrinate the audience. The propaganda was meant to be subtle for as soon as one becomes aware of the effects of the material and its bias, it has lost its purpose. It was of the utmost importance to disguise propaganda in ways that did not seem explicitly political, like in entertaining movies. Goebbels also understood the tactic of repetition and that Germans respected authority, so if a movie's moral echoed a speech from Hitler, the message would penetrate society further.

To orchestrate Goebbels' well-crafted propagandistic symphony, all of his officials needed to be able to produce propaganda that would blunt the public's sensibilities to the continuous anti-Semitism, reinforce the superiority of the Aryan race, and boost German morale. As his diary details, Goebbels believed that propaganda would win the war. However, he eventually concluded that "[the Nazis] cannot change very much through propaganda; [they] must once again gain a big victory somewhere."<sup>34</sup> For propaganda to be as powerful as Goebbels thought it would be, it needs to penetrate generations because changing generational and cultural beliefs needs time.

The film was the ideal vehicle for the Volksgemeinschaft – the people's community – as it built a new Aryan culture to replace the sins of Weimar. Weimar classics like *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1920) and *Metropolis* (1927) were locked away along with German Expressionist themes. To centralize the German cinema industry, Goebbels allowed the domination of just four studios – Bavaria, UFA, Terra, and Tobis.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Doob, "Goebbels' Principles," 426.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 442.

<sup>35</sup> Eric Rentschler, "The Testament of Dr. Goebbels," *Film History* 8, no. 3 (1996): 321. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3815311>.

This centralization aligned with the Führerprinzip and the idea that “all roads lead to Hitler.” The studios needed to compete with each other for Hitler’s approval in a “survival of the fittest” style; ultimately, UFA won in the end thereby gaining the most notoriety.

An article written by Hilmar Hoffman, the artistic director of the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen and initiator of the Jewish Museum Frankfurt, analyzed the manipulation of Germans through Nazi cinema. He categorizes Nazi films into multiple types, but the most notable is the “historicizing film”.<sup>36</sup> Examples of films in this genre include Veit Harlan’s *The Great King* (1942), a biographical film about Frederick the Great, and Harlan’s *Kolberg* (1945). The purpose of historicizing films was to make every German realize the power of the Führer and compare him to other men of history whose greatness is already renowned.<sup>37</sup> For Goebbels, the film was limitless and offered him a type of freedom in a department that would otherwise be dominated solely by Hitler. The Nazis knew escapism during the war and the Holocaust was important and films alleviated the brutal realities of real life and allowed for an escape into a world that became a haven for just ninety minutes.

### **Conclusion and Legacy of Nazi Cinema**

The Reich Minister of Education, Dr. Bernhard Rust once said, “The National Socialist State definitely and deliberately makes the film the transmitter of its ideology.”<sup>38</sup> For children, the film became the ideal vehicle for Nazism because it provided an emotional outlook full of excitement and adventure. This coupled with Nazi parades, uniforms, and a camaraderie supposedly found only in the Sturmabteilung (SA) and HJ. For the rest of Germany, cinema offered a fantastical reverie that deceitfully cloaked genocidal anti-Semitism, totalitarianism, and the concepts of Lebensraum, Volksgemeinschaft, Gleichschaltung, and Übermensch.

Today, many Nazis propaganda films have been banned from public consumption, except if one has gone through proper education. Eric Rentschler captures the legacy of Nazi cinema and why these films are banned:

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<sup>36</sup> Hilmar Hoffman and Ernst Maass, “Manipulation of the Masses Through the Nazi Film,” *Film Comment* 3, no. 4 (1965): 35. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43754366>.

<sup>37</sup> Hoffman and Maass, “Manipulation of the Masses,” 36.

<sup>38</sup> John Altmann, “Movies’ Role in Hitler’s Conquest of German Youth,” *Hollywood Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (1948): 381. doi:10.2307/1209310.

No official list of these proscribed titles (Vorbehaltsfilme) exists; such a list could only demonstrate that the German government considers the populace of its democracy in crucial ways politically immature. Right-wing radicals and neo-fascist groups still partake [in] Nazi films and there is a substantial German black market for banned war movies, newsreels, and Hitler documentaries. One wonders how these films now resonate in a climate of violence towards foreigners, in a nation casting about for a new collective self-understanding.<sup>39</sup>

While these films once served the purpose of distracting the public from harsh truths, they now serve as an outlet for those trying to reignite the same atrocities in a society trying to atone for Nazi villainy and memorialize those who perished in and those who survived the Holocaust.

In *Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse*, Lang reveals the Nazis' terrifying plans of crime and their unappeasable appetite for destruction and global domination through a character parodying Hitler who is powerful through his puppeteering and anonymity. In Steinhoff's *Hitlerjunge Quex*, the Hitler Youth indoctrinates a child with the existential fear of Jewish Bolshevism, highlighting the themes of nationalism, class, communist inferiority, and child-like innocence. In *Der Ewige Jude*, Hippler justifies the ghettoization of Poland and the "Final Solution" by depicting Jews as sub-human through the juxtaposition of Aryans and Jews, a perversion of footage, and an omniscient third-person narrator in a pseudo-documentary style. In Harlan's *Kolberg*, the themes of Führerprinzip, nationalism, and religion are displayed by falsifying the titular historical event to improve morale, represent Hitler and Germany and their hopeful win, and be the miracle that would save the Third Reich from its defeat.

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<sup>39</sup> Rentschler, "The Testament of Dr. Goebbels," 322.

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