

# A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER IN THE DREAM FACTORY — APPROPRIATION OF POPULAR GENRES BY THE EAST GERMAN FILM INDUSTRY

JON RAUNDALEN

*Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim*

*During the 1960s the East German state-controlled film studio DEFA drastically increased their production of popular genre films. This development was propelled by the competition from an unrelenting flow of western radio- and television signals transgressing the Berlin Wall. These East German genre films took their iconographical cues from the commercial genres of Western Europe and Hollywood, but filled the forms with appropriate socialist content.*

*In this article I investigate this appropriation of internationally established film genres in the GDR as a point of convergence between the transsystemic discourse of popular culture and the strong isolationist efforts of the GDR state. Through empirically informed close analysis of the musical *Heißer Sommer* and the western *Spur des Falken*, I aim to show how these very awkward negotiations between isolation and integration led to a reinvention of the genres in question, and how this process can be traced in the films' narratives.*

## *Introduction*

Film censorship in the GDR in the late 1960s was among the strictest in Eastern Europe. Films from capitalist countries were shown only after being scrutinized by a censorship board, and often films from the other socialist countries, including the Soviet Union, could not be screened in the GDR because their content was deemed in violation with local cultural policy.<sup>1</sup> However, this isolationist stance was somewhat ironically accompanied by a substantial import of American and West European films and a commitment to imitating the enemy's product within the national film industry.<sup>2</sup>

Highlighting this self-contradictory relationship to the west, I want to contribute to the lifting of the thick cold war mist which obscures the degree to which one of the most isolated of all state-socialist countries (post-1961 GDR) was nevertheless deeply embedded in a transsystemic flow of pop-cultural concepts and ideas. My angle of incidence in this article is to explore how this flow was interpreted and handled within East German cultural policy. Although it is obvious that pop-cultural phenomena, like everything else in the public sphere, were affected by the cold war antagonisms of the 1960s, detailed studies of these processes are

still scarce. This article attempts to counter the commonly held belief that postwar film making in Eastern Europe was only about oppressed film makers struggling to smuggle subversive political metaphors past evil censors. While this may be a very important part of East European film history, its long-time position as the dominating trope for books and articles on East European film has all but eclipsed the vast range of entertainment films which were produced under communist rule.

Drawing on previously unpublished archival material in textual analyses of the two most popular East German films of 1968 — the western *Spur des Falken* and the musical *Heißer Sommer* — I trace and examine changes which were made within these genres as they were transferred from Hollywood and Western Europe to an East German setting. This interweaving of archival material with textual readings reveals the very awkward negotiations which took place between the requirements of established genre conventions and specific cultural policy demands placed on film makers in the late 1960s GDR.

### *Cultural–historical context*

The cultural climate in the GDR in the second half of the 1960s is known as the absolute freezing point in the republic's cultural history. However, culturally the decade started out on a quite positive note.

After the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 many groups in East German society were subjected to stricter surveillance and harsher state control than before. For many artists, however, the new isolation brought a certain degree of liberalization of censorship. Now that the so called *antifaschistischer Schutzwall* (anti-fascist bulwark) was in place the East Germans could finally feel 'safe and free amongst their own', according to official propaganda.<sup>3</sup> Thus, for a while, the artistic expression of contemporary social critique was officially regarded as a way of bettering and bolstering the socialist republic, rather than as acts of subversion. Over the next four years East German filmmakers became increasingly courageous in tackling social problems on film. This was done without the hitherto required socialist realist concept of 'the superimposition of the better 'soon' on a still imperfect 'now'.<sup>4</sup> An increasing number of stories about non-political and/or rebellious youth and their problems with society, parents, and Party were now being told with an unusual honesty and directness. These films were known as *Gegenwartsfilme* (contemporary films).

In 1965 this trend came to an abrupt end. During the 11th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) in December of 1965 the Party ruthlessly struck down on what they termed a 'bourgeois scepticist' movement by banning almost a whole year's production of films and blacklisting both established and up-and-coming film makers. The wrath of the SED in the winter of 1965 and the spring of 1966 also touched other groups of artists, as well as writers, publishers and people working in television. This purge has later come to be known as the *Kahlschlag* (clear-felling) of talent and ambition in East German cultural life.<sup>5</sup>

One of the first films to emerge from this 'deforested' cultural landscape was the first ever East German western. *Die Söhne der Großen Bärin* (The Sons of the Great Mother Bear) premiered at East Berlin film theaters on 18 February 1966. It was instantly recognizable as a western — complete with cowboys, Indians, and noisy saloons — and became one of the biggest hits in GDR film history.<sup>6</sup> Over the next ten years the East German

state-monopolized film company Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA) produced ten western films and four musicals.<sup>7</sup> Some attempts had previously been made by DEFA within the musical genre prior to the *Kahlschlag*, but the post-1965 musicals represented a new, youthful style and clearly expressed the ambition to compete with American and West European popular genre films — on the competitors' home turf, so to speak.

### *Pop-culture as cold war battleground*

American and West German popular culture was from the very start of East German history viewed as a thoroughly decadent and dangerous phenomenon. In an important cultural policy document of the early 1950s the impact of American beat music was described as:

a veritable mudslide of boogie-woogie [. . .] being released on the German people through radio, film and gramophone records, a slide which our German Democratic Republic in no way will remain untouched by. It would be a mistake to underestimate the dangerous, warmongering role of the American hit tune music.<sup>8</sup>

This basic premise in the battle against American and West European pop music remained unchanged throughout the 1960s.<sup>9</sup> Certainly the erection of the Berlin wall in August 1961 stemmed the flow of West European and American recordings and related fan magazines etc., but there was no stopping the boundless radio waves and television signals emanating from powerful transmitters in West Berlin. Conflicts between local administrators of culture and members of popular rock 'n' roll bands reached a peak in 1965. The available documents from the Ministry of Culture leave no question about the seriousness with which this trend was treated. The belief in the 'warmongering role' of pop music went straight to the top of the socialist party leadership.<sup>10</sup>

An illustrative example is the political impact made by one small concert review printed in the socialist party newspaper *Neues Deutschland* on 4 April 1965.<sup>11</sup> At the end of this short review the claim was made that there was no essential difference between capitalist and socialist dance music. This statement was regarded as outrageous by the cultural authorities, represented by the Culture Division of the Central Committee, and to clear up any confusion surrounding the ideological status of western pop music the article was soon after discussed in meetings between representatives from the Ministry of Culture and leaders of the SED's youth organization FDJ in Leipzig.<sup>12</sup> Later it was the subject for two consecutive sessions in the Culture Division of the Central Committee.<sup>13</sup> In the months to come many so-called beat bands were banned from performing and rock and beat music was singled out as one of the serious threats to socialist society during the aforementioned *Kahlschlag*-Plenum in December of 1965. This was the culmination of a long-lasting debate over the role of popular music in socialist society. Already in 1961 the Agitation and Propaganda Division of SED's Central Committee had released an official newsletter with the telling title 'NATO-Politik und Tanzmusik' where — in an echo of the above cited 1951 document — the West German *Schlager* music was attacked as decadent, vindictive, anti-humanist war propaganda, in which 'mankind is offended and beauty is violated'.<sup>14</sup> Radio Luxembourg and the US sponsored Berlin-based radio station RIAS were singled out as the prime offenders of mankind. The newsletter concluded that new legislation to restrict the further distribution of western pop and dance music would be introduced, with legal basis in existing constitutional bans against 'chauvinism and war propaganda' and 'distribution of anti-humanist ideology'.

Significantly, the newsletter also stated that film was the only other art form, apart from the *Schlager*- and dance music, with which one could reach the whole of the young population, and which therefore had to be very closely monitored and regulated.

*Accommodating the young through entertainment*

Much as the Cultural Division of the Central Committee wanted to stem the flow of western beat-music and popular film, they were also committed to keeping the young East Germans happy, or at least, enthusiastic about the continuous progress of the socialist state. The creation and preservation of this progressive enthusiasm in the hearts of the young was placed high on the political agenda in the late 1960s. At the 7th Congress of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) in 1967, the head of state Walter Ulbricht devoted a significant part of his key speech on 'social development at the completion of socialism' to the role of the arts in socialist society.<sup>15</sup> This was necessary and expected since there was much uncertainty and scrambling in the cultural community as a result of the harsh crackdown on culture in 1965. In order to see clearly the changes in cultural climate and policy towards popular culture at this point it is illuminating to compare Ulbricht's deliberations over art and society at the 1967 7th Party Congress with corresponding statements made at the (pre *Kahlschlag*) 6th Party Congress held in 1963. It soon becomes clear that the language had changed in two specific respects related to the challenges posed by western influence on East German popular music and film. Firstly, the demarcation towards the West had become much sharper because the local cultural sector had failed to counter the surge of western influence. In a passage about entertainment art from 1963 Ulbricht could say that 'in earlier times music was simply copied from the West [. . .] and there is much that is good and progressive there'.<sup>16</sup> While his description of the role of entertainment art in the west in 1967 — especially in West Germany — would typically sound like this: 'Through the overwhelming majority of products from a manipulated *Unkultur* under the ideological influence of monopolistic capitalism, a distorted view of man is systematically being developed in West Germany.'<sup>17</sup> He followed this claim with an explanation of how commercial capitalist culture manipulates consumers into subservience and servility:

This manipulated *Unkultur* is intended to distract the consumers from any criticism of the imperialist system of domination, but at the same time make them adapt the historically outdated ethical ideals of the capitalist world, in order to make economic exploitation and political oppression seem like laws of nature.<sup>18</sup>

The second major change of emphasis from 1963 to 1967 was the call for the development of a socialist *Unterhaltungskunst* (entertainment art) to counter the 'decadent' and 'soulless' entertainment from the West. Ulbricht complained that much still remained to be done before the full potential of socialist entertainment was realized and said that all artists should consider this problem very seriously, and that 'all possible efforts must be made [. . .] in order to create a socialist *Unterhaltungskunst*.'<sup>19</sup> In Ulbricht's view there was one obstacle in particular which held up the development of entertainment forms that could rival those of the enemy. Far too many artists claimed that it was beneath their dignity to make entertainment art, according to Ulbricht, despite the fact that a plan for the development of socialist entertainment concepts had been laid already by the Bitterfelder Conference in 1959.

It was in other words the authorities who were pushing for entertainment while the artists were holding back. This was also the case within DEFA. The conflict between art and

entertainment had polarized into a standoff between influential DEFA film makers on the one side and cultural policy enforcers in the studio leadership and censors at the Film Bureau in the Ministry of Culture<sup>20</sup> on the other. In a report from January 1964, from the leader of the Culture Division of the Central Committee, Siegfried Wagner, to the very powerful leader of the Ideology Commission, Kurt Hager, Wagner proudly states that the new leadership at DEFA has 'energetically taken up the battle against the disapproval [among certain DEFA film makers] of entertainment genres, which for a long time obstructed development in this field.' The obstruction was identified as *intellektuelle Geschmäcklereien* (intellectual taste-quibbling) against primitiveness and platitudes, on the part of snobbish film makers who did not realize the need for films which filled the all-important criterion of *Massenwirksamkeit*.<sup>21</sup>

The renewed and sharper demarcation towards the west, combined with the encouragement to explore every entertainment genre, were the cultural policy signals needed to set off the flourish within exotic and traditionally escapist genres such as the western and the musical in post-*Kahlschlag* GDR film.<sup>22</sup> It turns out that the outpouring of westerns and musicals from DEFA in the late 60s and onwards — which at first glance could seem like a fairly bizarre phenomenon — was one of very few options left open to DEFA filmmakers after the severe backlash of the social-critique films of the pre-*Kahlschlag* years.

### *Appropriating the musical*

In the following I will shed some light on what actually happens to a genre upon its appropriation by GDR film makers, and reveal aspects of the process by which its properties are made to fit in with the current political environment. After very briefly addressing the American, Soviet and West German musicals' relation to the East German variety, I will analyze specific sequences from the musical *Heißer Sommer*. These sequences will serve as examples for the measures of appropriation and how they materialized in a finished film.

The musical is considered by many critics to be the most fanciful and escapist of all film genres — its narrative infrastructure being dependent on the so-called 'integrated' song numbers, with truly unrealistic depictions of people bursting into song in public places accompanied by invisible orchestras. The promise of fame and/or fortune drives the protagonists to surmount obstacles and to get their reward (financial and/or amorous) in the end. Also, in the American musical, the exhibition of material wealth and general flamboyancy came to be among the expected ingredients. Such organized capitalist and escapist daydreaming, diverting the people's attention from the matters of real life and socialist progress, was wholly unacceptable in the context of GDR cultural life. As illustrated in the following 1967 statement by Dr Jahrow, chief film policy advisor for the Film Production Division within the Ministry of Culture's Film Bureau: 'The deciding factors of personality development and the central aesthetic problem for socialist art lies in the interactions between Man — work — culture.'<sup>23</sup>

The Soviet film industry had, rather successfully, appropriated and reinvented the musical genre in the 1930s and 1940s. A row of entertaining musicals were made with stories appropriate to the Communist world view, where the ideals of optimism and popularity inherent to the concept of socialist realism was exploited to the full. The Soviet musical was dominated by tales of revolutionary heroics and optimistic tales of proletarian heroes of collectivization and industrialization. The fact that film makers in the Soviet Union had already appropriated the

musical was obviously important to East German film makers in legitimating their own employment of the genre, but pathos-filled tales from the revolution or the factory environment was not what the youth of the GDR craved in the late 1960s. The youth wanted stories of relevance to them, which were modern and had a western feel to them — something in the line of what they would be listening to on the radio, and could catch glimpses of on West German television shows. In other words the successful socialist appropriation of the genre in the Soviet Union had to be replaced by a new, youthful, contemporary and nationally flavoured version to meet the demands of the day. Among other things, the influence of the immensely popular West German musicals — known as *Schlagerfilme* — had to be taken into account. Especially the *Schlagerfilme* featuring the young couple Conny Froboess and ‘the German Elvis’ Peter Krauss.<sup>24</sup>

An important factor to keep in mind at this point is that although GDR youth could not watch the *Schlagerfilme* in GDR cinemas, the hit-songs integral to the concept of such films were frequently played on West German radio, and were occasionally performed on West German television.<sup>25</sup> Hit songs from the popular British youth musicals of the time, like the ones featuring Cliff Richard, were also easily accessible through Radio Luxembourg and other pop music channels.<sup>26</sup> In addition to this influence from the outside, the very popular (East) Berlin Youth Club’s radio station DT64 played a lot of music from Western Europe and the US, constantly violating the state quota of less than forty per cent music from capitalist countries.<sup>27</sup>

This embeddedness in the transsystemic flow of popular culture — through the airwaves of modern broadcast media — could not possibly be ignored by the cultural authorities or the makers of popular film.

### Heißer Sommer (1968)

As a concrete example of how the DEFA film makers dealt with this challenge I have chosen the musical *Heißer Sommer* from 1968. The film tells the story of two groups of young East Germans who are on the way to spending their summer holiday in a small fishing village on the Baltic coast. In a cat and mouse game the two groups, of eleven boys and ten girls, compete to get there first. During their stay one of the girls, Brit, is courted by both of the leading males, Kai and Wolf. Aside from this triangular love affair driving the plot, the narrative mainly consists of scenes where the teenagers play tricks on each other and innocently misbehave as one would expect a group of youngsters on holiday to do. On the periphery of the love triangle of Brit, Kai, and Wolf, stands Stupsi, the always sensible ‘leader’ of the girl group, who secretly harbours romantic feelings for Kai. At the climax of *Heißer Sommer* Kai and Wolf have a dramatic fist fight over Brit, but are brought to their senses by members of the two groups, headed by the sensible Stupsi, and are asked to explain themselves.

The plot is wrapped up somewhat disappointingly, if one expects a classical happy ending. In the second last sequence Kai fools around with a towel over his head, chasing bikini-clad girls around a water pump, and though blindfolded, ends up with his arms around Stupsi. The obvious interpretation of this scene would be that they were meant for each other, and that fate had brought them together, especially since the status of the actors (Frank Schöbel playing Kai and Chris Doerk playing Stupsi) as a couple in real life was more than well known to the GDR audience at the time.<sup>28</sup> Stupsi, despite having shared some tender moments with Kai

earlier on in the film, rejects him and effectively sends him off to look for Brit. In a short clip we see Brit giving Wolf a look of disdain, leaving the coast clear for Kai and Brit finally to get together. They kiss and smile at each other, and Wolf makes a gesture of approval. In a moment of comic relief one of the other boys asks Stupsi if she's got a boyfriend yet. She rolls her eyes at him and falls over on her back, kicking off the last song number where all the boys and girls for the first time take part together in synchronized movements to the rhythms of the main theme of *Heißer Sommer*.

By this rapid lapse into song and dance the love between Kai and Brit is left hanging in the air and a feeling of strangeness — which goes for the whole film — is reinforced, a sense that something is not right about the love story. The only time we really get a feeling of sparks flying in this film are the scenes from an afternoon where Kai and Stupsi (played by the real life couple) spend some time together alone. Nothing Kai says or does to Brit in the rest of the film is nearly as affectionate as the tenderness between him and Stupsi. The couple Kai and Brit share the screen several times for duets and dance numbers, where they declare their love for one another, but these sequences consistently fail to convince. The reasons for Brit's interest in Kai are fairly well developed, while the grounds for Kai's attraction to Brit remain strangely vague. It is almost as if the only real proof of Kai's love for Brit must be deduced from the power of the punches he delivers to her other suitor. What might be the significance of the fact that the conflicts roused by the love triangle, which is supposed to be the plot's motor, are so unconvincing? And how to interpret the fact that the resolution of these conflicts and the chosen outcome, although a 'happy end', is so unsatisfying?

The answer can be found in the process of political appropriation of the genre and its narrative required in order for this film to see the light of day in East Germany. Researching the documents from the GDR Ministry of Culture's Film Bureau is enlightening in this respect. In a letter by the chief director of DEFA, requesting permission to screen *Heißer Sommer*, he claims that with this film the musical genre has made a leap forward by 'the fact that in this film an attempt is made to capture aesthetically, and engage the viewer in, the influence of the collective on the individual and the influence of the individual on the collective.'<sup>29</sup> In other similar documents further emphasis is placed on the fact that 'at the centre of the action stands the morally oriented story of the relationship between Brit, Wolf and Kai, who do not withdraw from the group, but always stay in close connection with the collective actions of both the youth groups.'<sup>30</sup>

This clearly shows that prime importance was placed upon the depiction of the *inter*-conflict between the individual and the collective — as opposed to the *intra*-conflicts between the individuals involved in the love triangle. A few references were also made to the cheerful (*heitere*) characteristics of the musical genre, but this aspect of the genre was consistently subordinated to the individual/collective story and was only ever mentioned as an effective means to heighten the youth's positive feelings about their homeland GDR. The idea of amusement for amusement's sake, as a form of relaxation, did not exist in this discourse. In the censorship protocols and other available documents from the Film Bureau the entertaining aspects of any film's narrative were explained and assessed in relation to the film's potential *Massenwirksamkeit*. It appears as if the entertainment arts, in which Walter Ulbricht and the SED believed so strongly, always had to be excused for being entertaining. Very often the promotion of a supposedly specific socialist *Lebensgefühl* and *Lebensfreude* (experience/joy of living) was used as the cornerstone argument for focusing on the fun and recreational sides of life, as opposed to work related subjects.<sup>31</sup>

It is hard to say, on the basis of the sources presently available, what the film makers themselves really wanted out of the making of entertainment genre films, but surely some of the directors choosing this format wanted first and foremost to amuse their audience and have a good time while making such films. Jo Hasler, the director of *Heißer Sommer*, in an interview a few years after the film's release, appeared to be very pleased by the signals coming from the 8th SED Party Congress in 1971 that there was 'all possible reason for happiness in our [socialist] world, and therefore the arts may not be frugal with the cheerful colour tones.'<sup>32</sup> This was, from the Party point of view, obviously meant as a directive to paint the happiness of the socialist world with fresh colors and not as general permission to have more fun. Thus, the melancholy artist had reason to beware, while a director of cheerful genre films, like Jo Hasler, could exploit such an opportunity and make more entertaining films than before. Whether the late Jo Hasler willingly conformed to the demands of socialist realism, and the closely related ideal of content-over-form, is irrelevant however. The product, *Heißer Sommer*, speaks for itself as a cultural artifact. The tale it tells us is one of very awkward negotiations between the wish, on the one hand, to capture a large young audience by adopting a transnational popular genre, making an uncomplicated film about summer and love, and, on the other hand, the need to tell an 'effective', morally and politically educational story.

This brings us back to the reasons for the badly functioning love story of *Heißer Sommer*. I believe that the core of the problem lies in the fact that Chris Doerk and Frank Schöbel both appear in it. The following analysis can serve as an illustration of the difficulties arising when a global genre formula is given a local flavor which interferes with the motives behind the strictly political appropriation for didactic purposes.

Doerk and Schöbel's status as two of the biggest and most beloved celebrities in the GDR in the late 1960s made them very attractive to film makers. They would automatically draw a large audience and hence heighten the *Massenwirksamkeit* of any film they appeared in. Casting the couple Doerk and Schöbel as the pair who get together at the end of the movie would have drastically heightened the emotional impact of the happy end, but would simultaneously have contradicted the political morality tale that the cultural authorities — represented by the Film Bureau at the Ministry of Culture — wanted to tell. In other words, the story in this case had to be 'tamed' in order to contain the possible emotional engagement by the audience in the love-story part of the narrative. This reveals the inherent contradictions in the film makers' assignment. They were expected to draw a youth crowd with the help of a fresh film genre, popular music and much-loved stars, but should at the same time avoid overwhelming them to ensure that they also got the ideological message. An alternative, hypothetical, conclusion of the film, with Schöbel and Doerk — playing Kai and Brit — embracing over the end credits, would have been a rousing finale that would have overshadowed the educational tale, and would thereby have subverted the main message: that the responsibilities within the collective take precedence over the personal needs and feelings of the individual.

This problem still exists in the film as it is, with Kai and Brit crossing the line between their respective collectives (boy group/girl group) and their individual wishes (forming a competing unit as a pair). The way I see it, attempts are made to correct this 'flaw' in the manuscript by covering it up in the montage. In the end sequence, as in most of the earlier scenes involving the developing love between the lead characters, the montage and placement of song and dance numbers consistently deny us the pleasure of engaging in the emotions of the characters — presumably guiding our attention away from the 'individualistic' love story towards 'the morally oriented story' of the primacy of the collective over the individual. The



very sudden break-off of Kai kissing Brit in the end sequence, and the quick joke propelling us into the final synchronized choreography of the collective movement of all the boys and girls, is exemplary of this practice and can at best be interpreted as an intentional Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*. As such, it succeeds in denying us any grain of sentimental indulgence with the happy pair, struggling hopelessly to keep our attention glued to the film's political metaphors for the struggle between individualism and collectivism.

Contributing to this *Verfremdungseffekt* is the way in which the character of Stupsi is drawn. For some reason, never explained in the film's narrative, Stupsi does not give in to the obvious temptations of the hot summer. She may dance around a bit and be cheerful, but aside from that her role throughout the film is that of the platonic, sensible personality. This seems like an odd choice for a lead character of a musical about boys and girls enjoying a hot summer by the sea. Again the strangeness is due to the fact that there is nothing within the film's plot which motivates or explains this aspect of Stupsi's behavior, but rather the external political demand to display the unrealistic, ideologically correct demeanour of the so-called 'socialist personality.' Stupsi's character is obviously designed to operate as the film's 'positive hero', as prescribed by the doctrine of socialist realism. That is to say the central character who will, in the face of different dilemmas, always make the correct choices according to socialist politics and morality, supposedly functioning as an unambiguous, exemplary model for the members of the audience.

In spite of several such bizarre decisions in the process of appropriation of the musical genre for the production of *Heißer Sommer* the film reached the number two spot among the most successful films in the GDR in 1968.<sup>33</sup> It was only surpassed by the enormously popular *Spur des Falken*.<sup>34</sup> This means that already by the summer of 1968 — one year after Ulbricht's call for a radical strengthening of the *Unterhaltungskunst* — entertaining genre films dominated audience figures. *Spur des Falken* was the third East German western — or *Indianerfilm* — to be made, and the first to be based on an original DEFA manuscript. I will return to analyses of sequences from this film towards the end of the article, after addressing some crucial points related to German western-tradition and the role of the Indian in the *Indianerfilme* and in the Marxist world view.

### *Appropriating the Western*

The western genre enjoyed a long-standing tradition in Germany long before it was taken up by the East German film industry. The German western tradition is almost as old as the genre itself. With Karl May's immensely popular narratives about Chief Winnetou and the Teutonic pioneer Old Shatterhand (35 volumes published between 1875 and 1909), the Germans had their own western author and their own Germanic style western hero to look up to. After World War II, however, May's fiction was banned in the Soviet sector of Germany on the grounds that it exhibited undesirable bourgeois attitudes. Klaus Mann's accusations against May for being 'The Cowboy Mentor of the Führer' also contributed significantly to keeping his books out of GDR distribution.<sup>35</sup> May's fiction came thus to live an intense shadow-life in the socialist republic. When some of these books were brought to the big screen in West Germany in the early 1960s, East German youth traveled in large numbers to cinemas across the border of Czechoslovakia to see their beloved heroes in action.<sup>36</sup>

Witnessing this pilgrimage, a group of DEFA film makers began considering the idea of appropriating the western by treating its classical frontier narratives from the perspective of

Marxist historical materialism and the socialist world-view. Through this ingenious turn they were able to develop a western film variety which was immensely popular with the youth, had the educational value of explaining key concepts in historical materialism and at the same time painted a very unflattering picture of the historical roots of contemporary American society. This turned out to be the recipe for the ideal *massenwirksamer* film. The irresistible appeal of this formula proved capable of overturning even an old SED veto declaring the western genre an unhealthy and possibly 'criminalizing influence on young minds.'<sup>37</sup>

The DEFA western played to the East German audience's affinity for the May westerns, in that it moved the Indian to the centre of the narrative. The 'noble savage' image of a 'good Indian' was a familiar concept since May's novels prominently featured 'noble savages' like Chief Winnetou. However, such a peaceful relationship between a 'good Indian' and the white oppressors was not only in conflict with local GDR ideology, but contradicted the very foundation of Marxism. Consequently, the peace-loving Indian of the 'noble savage'-type was often presented as naive and foolish in the *Indianerfilme*. The DEFA Indian differed significantly from chief Winnetou in that he was not prepared to be a wise and gentle friend to the white imperialists. The DEFA Indian was an empowered, stony-faced Indian chief, sporting big muscles and loaded guns, uncompromisingly devoted to chasing off the whites, if necessary by burning whole settler villages to the ground.

The East German westerns were deliberately launched as *Indianerfilme* and not as westerns or cowboy films, which were the current labels in other parts of the world. The idea was to place the Indian hero at the centre of the action and to depict how the west was *really* won, thereby exposing the brutal and cynical nature of capitalism — as an example pertaining both to the past, the present, and the future. In 1970, during a film discussion with 350 workers at Leipzig's Bau- und Montagekombinat, the script writer of several *Indianerfilme*, Dr Günter Karl, explained the purpose of the films as follows: 'To represent the inhumane, capitalist order of society in all its brutality — this we consider to be our task.'<sup>38</sup>

But how could this new western hero serve as a model for the contemporary East German film-goer? Did the two have any common denominator? To the contemporary viewer, the demand for this kind of connection between the history that unfolds on the screen and the political and practical needs of the times may seem fairly absurd. But, as I have already demonstrated in the analysis of the musical, such clearly defined needs and goals were the 'to be, or not to be' of popular films in the GDR in the 1960s. What the Indian hero and the East German film-goer supposedly had in common was their disapproval of the behavior of the white Americans on the nineteenth-century American continent — and in a wider sense — a general resistance against world-wide, capitalist imperialism. This political affinity notwithstanding, the fusion of a correct Marxist interpretation of history and the role of the Indian hero, with whom the audiences were supposed to identify, entailed great contradictions.

### *The Indian as the western hero*

Within the Marxist understanding of history — the basic premise for the *Indianerfilm* with which the GDR film makers had to comply — the historical evolution of society goes through a chain of predetermined stages. Each of these stages is placed in a hierarchy of development according to the ownership of the means of production. A simplified representation of the stages could be made as follows:

1. Primitive communism (*Urgesellschaft*)
2. The slave society (*Sklavenhaltergesellschaft*)
3. The feudal society (*Feudalismus*)
4. The bourgeois or capitalist society (*Kapitalismus*)
5. Socialist society (*Sozialismus*, a transitional phase to communism)
6. The classless communist society (*Kommunismus*)<sup>39</sup>

Marx posited a necessary historical evolution where each new phase would transcend the preceding one — often through violent upheaval, that is, revolution. The narratives of the *Indianerfilme*, always revolve around a conflict between the Indians who represent ‘primitive communism’ and the whites, who represent the ‘capitalist society.’ According to the film makers, one of the main tasks of the *Indianerfilm* was the representation of these evolutionary stages and their utter incompatibility with one another.

As a positive hero the primitive communist Indian fitted the East German cinema because of the specific status of primitive communism within this Marxist system. Here primitive communism was the bearer of many values which were later realized in communism proper. With its collective aspects and approximate classlessness in particular, the stage of primitive communism was considered closest to the communist utopia in ideological terms, even though they were far removed in time. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the first evolutionary stage (as well as the four consecutive stages) constituted a condition and an order of society which, due to historical necessity, *had to be abandoned* on the road leading towards the utopia. In the hyper-industrialized GDR of the 1960s any back-to-nature oriented quest was deemed reactionary and counter-revolutionary. At this point, the representation of the Indian hero became really problematic.

Although in the *Indianerfilme* the Indian was portrayed as the hero, everybody knew that the real-life battle for the Wild West was won by the whites. Moreover, the form of society which was represented by the Indian could hardly, in the East German socialist context, be depicted as a desirable or valuable alternative to the industrialized conditions of contemporary society. So what kind of victory could the Indian hero be afforded? Only symbolic quasi-triumphs of striking down the odd white individual who represented the capitalist system. Greater victories were out of the question. Within this oversimplified version of Marxian history, the value of primitive Indian society could not be granted serious analysis without simultaneously implying a politically undesirable lamentation over it. Unfortunately the *Indianerfilm*-makers’ solution to this problem was usually to opt for hopelessly one-dimensional Indian characters and very limited descriptions of Indian society.

Another possible understanding of the role of the Indian in the *Indianerfilme* is to consider him as a symbolic representative of a larger group of people in the contemporary world, namely oppressed native inhabitants of third world countries. Among the East European countries the GDR had by far the strongest interest and involvement in the de-colonized African countries.<sup>40</sup> The SED boasted an energetic *Afrikapolitik* and contributed to the establishment of Marxist–Leninist governments in several African countries. They also had education programs through which African students could receive scholarships to study in the GDR. These were efforts which were closely linked with the global ambitions of communism and were actively presented as proof of the GDR’s status as the home of internationalistic, altruistic socialism. In this perspective the *Indianerfilm* image of the righteous battle of an indigenous people against capitalist oppressors could easily be interpreted as a metaphor for

the current process of de-colonizing Africa.<sup>41</sup> Referring to the success of some *Indianerfilme* screened in Africa and the Middle East, the writer of several *Indianerfilm* manuscripts, Dr Günter Karl, told reporters that 'I think the success of our adventure-series in Arab and African countries can be traced back to a given possibility of identification with the Indian people's struggle for liberation.'<sup>42</sup>

That may be so, but such historical parallels could also include some difficult anachronisms and paradoxes. Firstly, communism as a societal system or political force did not exist as an alternative to the historical development on the American continent in the mid/late nineteenth century, and could therefore not enter the scene and save the day. Socialist solutions to the conflicts were only alluded to in the *Indianerfilme* through rather strained metaphors. Secondly, if the antagonists of the capitalist oppressors in the *Indianerfilme* were a tribe of primitive communists, trying to hold back the wheels of time, so to speak, they would be taken to represent a reactionary force rather than a progressive one. This, as I have touched on earlier, was the reason why primitive Indian society was never depicted as a realistic or desirable alternative to capitalism. This last point was not a problem for the saviour image of the GDR in Africa, however. There the sympathy for the natives was always closely connected to support for 'revolutionary movements' and the establishment of 'progressive governments'.

#### Spur des Falken (1968)

The film *Spur des Falken* from 1968 was the third of the *Indianerfilme* and the first to be based on an original script, which meant that the scriptwriter, Dr Karl, was free to construct the plot according to the ideological ideas he wanted to get across, without any interference from authors who wanted the film to stay true to their original conception of the story.<sup>43</sup> Now there were no obstacles in the way of the complete appropriation of the western for socialist purposes. Consequently *Spur des Falken* at times works like a children's-book version of the Marxist view of history.

The film tells the tale of the Indian chief Weitspähender Falke and his tribe, living in the Black Hills in the second half of the nineteenth century, just as the gold rush is about to hit the area (around 1876). The main antagonist is 'Snaky' Joe Bludgeon (sic!), a ruthless property speculator ready to kill anything and anyone who stands in the way of his insatiable greed. After some back and forth between the Indians, some reasonably friendly small-time gold diggers and Joe Bludgeon's bloodthirsty gang, total war breaks out between the Indians and the whites. Bludgeon blows up a small mountain close to the Indian's camp site, killing women and children (with obvious reference to American atrocities in Vietnam), and the Indians take righteous revenge by setting the whole settler village on fire. The cavalry arrive too late to stop the fire, but rescue the whites from the wrath of the Indians.

In a surprising inversion of genre conventions the attack by the Indians is accompanied by rousing, victorious orchestra music, making the subsequent single horn fanfare signaling the arrival of the cavalry seem impotent by comparison. This contrast is repeated as the cavalry attack the Indians. Dramatic, gloomy music makes the cavalry appear as evil butchers, but as the Indians ambush them the victorious theme instantly swells up again.

After this encounter with the cavalry the other Indian chiefs decide to pack up and leave for a safer area, while Weitspähender Falke goes after Bludgeon one last time. In solid western tradition the film ends with a climactic fight between the good guy and the bad guy. Once

Bludgeon is killed Weitspähender Falke joins his tribe and moves north with the hope of a better life there. Even this very brief outline of the plot should give some impression of a new version of the western genre in the making.

The film is, because of the way the plot was designed, absolutely filled with examples of historical and political allegories. One of the most striking is the way in which Bludgeon's character is constructed to fit the ultimate evil in classical Marxism: the state of monopolistic capitalism. Monopolistic capitalism is described, in a contemporary East German reference book, as the ultimate phase of capitalist imperialism, characterized by the 'fusion of the power of the [business-] monopolies with the powers of the state [including the military], giving the financial oligarchies the ability to control directly all aspects of life in society.'<sup>44</sup> This fusion of powers is clearly suggested in a scene early on in the film, contributing to the construction of Bludgeon's character: After having bragged about his previous atrocities against Indians to eager listeners on the train on the way to Tanglewood (the settler village in the film) Joe Bludgeon is greeted with a big smirk and a manly embrace from the local cavalry chief, Captain Holland, as he steps down from the train. Holland asks him whether everything worked out in Washington, and Bludgeon replies with the rhetorical question: 'Did it ever *not* work out for me in Washington?' They both smile, and have a dirty and conspiratorial laugh. The monopolistic capitalist (Bludgeon) embraces the representative of the military power (Holland) who asks whether the state (Washington) is on board. Bludgeon's immediate and arrogant reply signals that he takes this alliance for granted. The basic infrastructure of monopolistic capitalism is secured.

A little earlier in the film, before Bludgeon's entry, we are made familiar with some of the other characters. From the top of a hill Weitspähender Falke and his companion, on horseback, are looking down on two white men, Pat and Chat, as they are washing for gold in a small stream at the bottom of the valley. The companion looks worried and says to Falke: 'You're right, the yellow metal makes them lose their minds', Falke replies: 'Many white men will come here to our mountains. The iron horse will bring them here from far and near.' They both ride down the valley, and greet the men in the white man's language.<sup>45</sup> In a reasonably friendly tone the men make the exchange of a deer against a nugget of gold, and everyone seems to be pleased. In the perspective of the Marxist view of history the Indians and Pat and Chat are for the time being functioning on a fairly equal level of development. Both parties live very primitively, more or less from hand to mouth. By exchanging gold nuggets for game, they participate in a form of barter economy, where both parties are trading in natural goods. Because of this equality in 'mode of production', which is of seminal importance in Marxist theory, no-one is exploited and they can live peacefully side by side. Already in this early scene we do get clear hints, however, that we are witnessing a fragile relationship. According to the Marxist view of history, which I outlined earlier, and which it was the film makers' express intention to communicate in the *Indianerfilme*, the different levels of development can not exist side by side. They were regarded as incompatible by definition and a clash between different levels could only result in the exploitation and subsequent annihilation of the former by the latter. The interesting tension in this scene is caused by the ambiguous status of gold in the exchange between the Indians and the whites.

The gold nugget is in one sense only a 'yellow metal' extracted from nature, but in the white man's world it is almost equal to money in use and (symbolic) value. One obvious alarm signal, to the effect that the friendly and equal relationship will not last for long, is set off by a remark from Chat, one of the gold diggers. Bragging about the size of a nugget he has just

found he says 'another one of these and I could buy the whole valley!' The following worried and suspicious facial expressions of the two Indians remind us who actually 'owns' the valley, distinctly illustrating the incompatibility between the system of private property of the capitalist society and the communal property of primitive communism.

These are two typical scenes from *Spur des Falken* where scriptwriter Dr Günter Karl explains to the audience, in broad, unmistakable strokes, how the situation of monopolistic capitalism developed on the American frontier in the 1870s. All researched reviews of *Spur des Falken* and interviews conducted with their makers confirm the intention of such an historical materialist reading of the film, which is consistently referred to as *die historische Wahrheit* (the historical truth).<sup>46</sup> The few documents available related to the film's way through the channels of censorship also prove that the official motives for making western-themed entertainment films were fundamentally educational, and that *Spur des Falken* in this respect displayed 'a remarkable stylistic unity of entertainment and education.'<sup>47</sup>

To a certain extent, I actually agree with this last statement. In spite of the badly functioning Indian character, the *Indianerfilme* managed to draw incredible crowds and, although in an oversimplified and banal way, they were probably fairly effective in influencing historical consciousness among their predominantly young audience. The historical materialist interpretation of American history, which was offered by the *Indianerfilme*, was already standard school curriculum for the audience. Thus, the two-hour exposure to the *Indianerfilm's* peculiar angle on the frontier myth supplied only the finishing touch to an already established understanding of historical evolution.

### Conclusion

With this article I wanted to demonstrate how the study of the often overlooked formula products of popular culture can be valuable angles of incidence to the understanding of cold war reality. As stated at the beginning of the article, the overwhelming majority of studies into the cinema of Eastern Europe have been concerned with artistically ambitious film projects and their legacy as part of dissident movements. In my present look at vastly popular entertainment films, however, the focus is moved from the area of dissidence and conflict to the film industry's day-to-day operations, thus revealing more about how the mainstream production system worked for those prepared to comply, rather than the more common — and somewhat exhausted — focus on the troubles of the critical or dissident film maker.

With their peculiar mix of familiar commercial genre conventions and socialist propaganda, GDR popular genre films embody a key dimension of the East German experience — namely the constant negotiation between isolation and imitation. The somewhat tragic, self-contradictory nature of this mediation becomes evident when we analyse pop-cultural products such as *Heißer Sommer* and *Spur des Falken*. These films, as I have shown, are evidence of a conscious strategy of imitation. The aim being to take on the enemy's forms, re-dress them, and channel their allure into a *Massenwirksamkeit* in service of socialist progress. Continually counteracting this strategy, however, were the coexisting strategies of isolation, like the systematic restrictions on travel and on the import of printed matter from the West, made possible by the erection of the Berlin wall. This self-contradictory relationship to western culture was a direct result of the critical leak in the 'iron curtain' caused by the constant flow of television and radio signals emanating from powerful transmitters in West Berlin. The

musicals and westerns of the GDR were created at the very point of convergence between these strategies of isolation and imitation. Placed under analysis they thus reveal both the high level of GDR integration in the non-terrestrial, transsystemic discourse of popular genres, as well as the steps of appropriation taken to align them with central policy demands of the period.

<sup>1</sup> The board consisted of twenty-five persons, ranging from writers and film critics to representatives from the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Zusammensetzung der Auswahlkommission für ausländische Spielfilme', 04.03.1969, from the Central Committee's Culture Division (ZK Abt. Kultur) to Kurt Hager, BArch DY30/IV A2/9.06/131. On the problem of too critical or liberal films from socialist countries: 'Problemspiegel', 25.05.1967, from Hauptverwaltung Film (HV-Film) to Kurt Hager, BArch DR1 4213, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Approximately thirty per cent of all films screened in the GDR were imports from non-socialist countries. This proportion was fairly stable in the period I will be discussing. See for example G. Schulz *FILMOGRAFIE — Ausländische Spiel- und abendfüllende Dokumentarfilme in den Kinos der SBZ/DDR 1945–1966* (Berlin: Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv & DEFA-Stiftung, 2001), and 'Neuzulassungen ausländischer Spielfilme', HV-Film Abt. Zulassung, BArch DR1 4717.

<sup>3</sup> The closing of the borders in 1961 was, in hindsight, obviously done to stop East Germans from fleeing to the West. The perception of the borderclosing at the time, however, was more complex. The official propaganda image of the wall as a safeguard against the imperialism of the West seems to have worked on certain sections of the population — especially within the arts and the intelligentsia — and the government made some minor liberalizing moves to give the impression that the closing of the border meant more freedom internally. (See for example K. Schroeder *Der SED-Staat* (München: Econ Ullstein List Verlag, 2000), p. 172) In the area of film making, censorship was slackened and more social critique was tolerated. Many film makers report that they felt it as a relief when the wall was in place. (See for example film maker Frank Beyer's autobiography *Wenn der Wind sich dreht* (Berlin: Der Econ Verlag, 2001), pp. 106–08) One DEFA film maker told me that even though the borderclosing cut him off from contact with his own parents in the West, he still believed it at the time to be the necessary thing to do. (Interview with DEFA dramaturg Hans-Joachim Wallstein, Berlin, 10.07.2003).

<sup>4</sup> S. Fitzpatrick *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 227.

<sup>5</sup> See E. Honecker *Bericht des Politbüros an die 11. Tagung des Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands 15.–18. Dezember 1965* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966). For post-1989 analysis see for example: *Kahlschlag, Das 11. Plenum des ZK der SED 1965 — Studien und Dokumente*, ed. by G. Agde (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag GmbH, 2000), E. Richter: 'Zwischen Mauerbau und Kahlschlag — 1961 bis 1965' and K. Wischnewski, 'Träumer und gewöhnliche Leute — 1966 bis 1979', in *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg: DEFA 1946–1992*, ed. by R. Schenk (Berlin: Filmmuseum Potsdam & Henschel Verlag GmbH, 1994), pp. 158–211 and pp. 212–63, respectively.

<sup>6</sup> According to official statistics by the state run film distributor PROGRESS Film Verleih a staggering 8,285,136 East Germans had seen the film within its first year of release. See M. Seifert, *Die Indianerfilme der DEFA — ausgewählte Beispiele unter besonderer Betrachtung der Expositionen* (Berlin: Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen der DDR, 1978, unpublished Diplomarbeit), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Musicals: *Reise ins Ehebett* (Trip to the Conjugal Bed, Jo Hasler, 1967), *Hochzeitsnacht im Regen* (Wedding Night in the Rain, Horst Seeman, 1967), *Heißer Sommer* (Hot Summer, Jo Hasler, 1968) and *Nicht schummeln, Liebling!* (Don't cheat, Darling!, Jo Hasler, 1973); Westerns: *Die Söhne der Großen Bärin* (The Sons of the Great Mother Bear, Josef Mach, 1966), *Chingachgook, die Große Schlange* (Chingachgook, the Big Snake, Richard Groschopp, 1967), *Spur des Falken* (Trace of the Falcon, Gottfried Kolditz, 1968), *Weißer Wölfe* (White Wolves, Konrad Petzold, 1969), *Tödlicher Irrtum* (Fatal Error, Konrad Petzold, 1970), *Osceola* (Konrad Petzold, 1971), *Tecumseh* (Hans Kratzert, 1972), *Apachen* (Apaches, Gottfried Kolditz, 1973), *Ulzana* (Gottfried Kolditz, 1974) and *Blutsbrüder* (Blood Brothers, Werner W. Wallroth, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> 'Realismus: die Lebensfrage der deutschen Musik [Rede von Nationalpreisträger Prof. Ernst H. Meyer auf der Gründungskonferenz des Verbandes Deutscher Komponisten und Musiktheoretiker, 3. April 1951, Auszug]', reprinted in E. Schubbe *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED* (Stuttgart-Degerloch: Seewald Verlag, 1972), p. 188.

<sup>9</sup> I use the example of popular music as an illustration of the broader confrontation between East German cultural authorities and western popular culture because this debate was more pronounced than the corresponding debates about popular film. The reason for this difference was the great availability of western music (via radio and television) and the low cost and effort of putting together a band. The film medium's dependence on specialized equipment and considerable capital made it less of a public domain.

<sup>10</sup> See later references to Walter Ulbricht's speech at the SED's 7th Party Congress in 1967.

<sup>11</sup> 'Butlers Boogie' (04.04.65) *Neues Deutschland*, Berlin.

<sup>12</sup> 'Kurzbericht über die Besprechung bei der Bezirksleitung der FDJ in Leipzig am 13. Mai 1965 . . . Gibt es eine sozialistische und eine kapitalistische Tanzmusik?', BArch DY30/IV A2/9.06/159.

<sup>13</sup> 'Ursachen für das Überhandnehmen negativer Erscheinungen in den Gitarrengruppen', 11.11.65, and 'Ergänzung zu den Ursachen über das Überhandnehmen negativer Erscheinungen in den Beat-Gruppen', 18.11.65, both from the Central Committee's Culture Division, BArch DY30/IV A2/9.06/159.

<sup>14</sup> 'NATO-Politik und Tanzmusik', a newsletter explaining the need for renewed strength and legislation in the battle against western pop music. Released as 'Parteinterne Material' by the Agitation and Propaganda Division of the SED's Central Committee in 1961, BArch DY30/IV A2/9.06/159.

<sup>15</sup> 'Die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik bei der Vollendung des Sozialismus [Referat Walter Ulbrichts auf dem VII. Parteitag der SED, 17. bis 22. April 1967, Auszug]', reprinted in E. Schubbe *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED* (Stuttgart-Degerloch: Seewald Verlag, 1972), pp. 1251–61.

<sup>16</sup> 'Die Entwicklung der sozialistischen Nationalkultur [Rede Walter Ulbrichts 'Das Programm des Sozialismus und die geschichtliche Aufgabe der sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands' auf dem VI. Parteitag der SED, 15. bis 21. Januar 1963, Auszug]', reprinted in E. Schubbe *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED* (Stuttgart-Degerloch: Seewald Verlag, 1972), p. 815.

<sup>17</sup> 'Die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik bei der Vollendung des Sozialismus [Referat Walter Ulbrichts auf dem VII. Parteitag der SED, 17. bis 22. April 1967, Auszug]', reprinted in E. Schubbe *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED* (Stuttgart-Degerloch: Seewald Verlag, 1972), p. 1259.

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

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1257.

<sup>20</sup> In the following I will be referring to the Hauptverwaltung Film (HV-Film) as the Film Bureau at the Ministry of Culture.

<sup>21</sup> *Massenwirksamkeit* was a central term in official GDR discourse on film. It meant 'politically effective on the masses', but because of its very positive connotations at the time it was overused and was sometimes used synonymously with 'popular'. In this concrete case it means both. Wagner is attacking bourgeois snobbishness towards the popular in general at the same time as promoting politically persuasive films. 'Vorlage zur Weiterentwicklung des sozialistischen Spielfilmschaffens', 24.01.1964, Siegfried Wagner reporting to Kurt Hager on the development of the GDR feature film production, BArch DY30/IV A2/9.06/122.

<sup>22</sup> Several attempts were also made within the space travel science-fiction genre. For example *Signale — ein Weltraumabenteuer* (Signals — a Space Adventure, Gottfried Kolditz, 1970).

<sup>23</sup> 'Einige Gedanken zur Einschätzung der ausgelieferten Produktion des DEFA-Spielfilmstudios im 1. Halbjahr 1967'. Written by Dr. Jahrow, film policy advisor (filmpolitischer Mitarbeiter) for the Film Production Division (Abteilung Filmproduktion) in the Film Bureau at the Ministry of Culture. BArch DR1 4534.

<sup>24</sup> *Wenn die Conny mit dem Peter* (Fritz Umgelter, 1958), *Conny und Peter machen Musik* (Werner Jacobs, 1960).

<sup>25</sup> As many as 3,216,000 TV licences were issued in the GDR by the end of 1965, which means close to two hundred TV sets per thousand inhabitants (*UNESCO Statistical Yearbook 1966* (Paris: UNESCO, 1965), p. 490). More than ⅓ of GDR territory were within reach of BRD (West German) television signals, and most people would view both East and West German broadcasts. In a study by Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung in Leipzig, performed in 1973, over seventy per cent responded that they listened to western radio stations several times per week, and over forty-seven per cent answered that they watched BRD television broadcasts several times per week. Source: 'Kulturell-künstlerische Interessen und Möglichkeiten Jugendlicher 1973–74', Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung an der Universität zu Köln. Available online at: [http://134.95.45.164/c:/ISYS\\_DDR/cb/6077cb.pdf#xml=http://134.95.45.164/ISYSquery/IRL6DE.tmp/58/hilite](http://134.95.45.164/c:/ISYS_DDR/cb/6077cb.pdf#xml=http://134.95.45.164/ISYSquery/IRL6DE.tmp/58/hilite), p. 22.



<sup>26</sup> The most relevant titles are: *The Young Ones* (Sidney J. Furie, 1961), *Summer Holiday* (Peter Yates, 1963), and *Wonderful Life* (Sidney J. Furie, 1964).

<sup>27</sup> DT 64 enjoyed great popularity with East German youth. Their call-in programs received as much as 1000 calls per show, and the station yearly received up to 50,000 cards and letters from their listeners. See B. Paulu, *Radio and Television Broadcasting in Eastern Europe* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1974), p. 242. The conflict over the 60/40 quota is evident in 'Einschätzung DT 64', 26.08.1965, a short report issued by the Central Committee's Culture Division, and in 'Analyse des Musikprogramms des Senders DT 64', 07.04.1966, a more detailed report by representatives of the state record company's artistic council (VEB Deutsche Schallplatten: Künstlerischer Bereich), BArch DY30/IV A2/9.06/159.

<sup>28</sup> Pop singer and fashion model Chris Doerk and Schlager singer Frank Schöbel were the GDR 'dream couple'. They got married on 19 September 1966 and sang together in countless shows and played together in the very successful musicals *Heißer Sommer* and *Nicht schummeln, Liebling!* When Chris Doerk was due with their son Alexander in April 1968 the nation is said to have been 'holding its breath' in anticipation. In the subsequent months all interested could follow the life of the little family on television shows as well as in the illustrated monthly *Neues Leben*. This sort of celebrity exposure was very unusual in the GDR, and makes the history of Doerk and Schöbel unique in the cultural history of the GDR. For a detailed study, see Claudia Fellmer's PhD dissertation *Stars in East German Cinema* (Southampton: University of Southampton, 2002), especially pp. 166–76. Frank Schöbel's autobiography, *Frank und frei* (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 2000), is also of interest.

<sup>29</sup> 'Stellungnahme für die Zulassung des Filmes "Heisser Sommer"', 20.12.1967. DR1 (BA-FA) Zulassungsprotokoll 138.

<sup>30</sup> 'Einschätzung' of *Heißer Sommer*, from the Film Policy Division (Filmpolitische Abteilung) of the Film Bureau at the Ministry of Culture, 09.01.1968. DR1 (BA-FA) Zulassungsprotokoll 138.

<sup>31</sup> Prominent in the following documents: 'Einige Gedanken zur Einschätzung der ausgelieferten Produktion des DEFA-Spielfilmstudios im 1. Halbjahr 1967', 18.06.1967, by Dr Jahrow, film policy advisor for the Film Production Division (Abteilung Filmproduktion) in the Film Bureau at the Ministry of Culture, BArch DR1 4534, p. 28; 'Zu einigen Grundzügen der Entwicklung des Kinospielelfilmes in der DDR bis 1980', 01.04.1967, BArch DR1 4540, p. 7, as well as in an assessment of film criticism against the entertainment films of 1968: 'Stellungnahme zur "KINO-EULE" im "Eulenspiegel" nr. 28 (2. Juliheft 1968) von Renate Holland-Moritz', 24.07.1968, BArch DR1 4213, p. 22.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with Jo Hasler, included in a press release in connection with the XII. Filmtage 1973. Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv, Filmmappe 12206.

<sup>33</sup> K. Wischnewski, 'Träumer und gewöhnliche Leute — 1966 bis 1979', in *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg: DEFA 1946–1992*, ed. by R. Schenk (Berlin: Filmmuseum Potsdam & Henschel Verlag GmbH, 1994), p. 223.

<sup>34</sup> According to the state distributor PROGRESS Film-Verleih statistics a total of 4,643,725 persons had seen the film within its first year of release. See M. Seifert, *Die Indianerfilme der DEFA — ausgewählte Beispiele unter besonderer Betrachtung der Expositionen* (Berlin: Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen der DDR, 1978, unpublished Diplomarbeit), p. 3.

<sup>35</sup> On the Klaus Mann/Karl May connection see G. Gemünden, 'Zwischen Karl May und Karl Marx: die DEFA-Indianerfilme (1965–1983)', *Film und Fernsehen*, 1 (1998), 39.

<sup>36</sup> F.-B. Habel, *Gojko Mitic, Mustangs, Marterphäle: Die DEFA-Indianerfilme* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf Verlag, 1997), p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> 'Östlicher Western' (07.07.65) *Der Spiegel*, Hamburg.

<sup>38</sup> 'Indianerbiwak im BMK Süd' (11.07.70) *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, Leipzig.

<sup>39</sup> This somewhat schematic listing is compiled by taking the description of these phases in Marx and Engels, 'First Premises of Materialist Method' from *The German Ideology* written in the 1840s (New York: International Publishers, 1970), pp. 42–57, and combining it with a contemporary East German interpretation which can be found in *Kleines Wörterbuch der Marxistisch-Leninistischen Philosophie*, ed. by Buhr and Kosing (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1974) pp. 86–88, pp. 153–55, and pp. 258–59.

<sup>40</sup> For a detailed study, see G. M. Winrow, *The Foreign Policy of the GDR in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>41</sup> Hans-Joachim Wallstein, dramaturg for nine *Indianerfilme*, told me that this Africa-connection was discussed in relation to the production of the *Indianerfilme*, but that the filmmakers were consciously avoiding too obvious references to de-colonized Africa (Interview with Hans-Joachim Wallstein, Berlin, 10.07.2003).

<sup>42</sup> 'Abenteuer, Aktion, Indianer?' (23.07.71) *Schweriner Volkszeitung*, Schwerin.

<sup>43</sup> DEFA dramaturg and script writer Günter Karl had several disputes with Professor of History Liselotte Welskopf-Henrich, who authored the books on which the first *Indianerfilm* was based. The disagreements were related to oversimplification of historical facts and conditions when turning her books into film. She once complained that a certain set piece for *Die Söhne der Grossen Bärin* looked more like a camping site in the GDR than an actual Indian camp, BArch DR 117 BA 1780, and interview with Hans-Joachim Wallstein (Berlin, 10.07.2003).

<sup>44</sup> *Kleines Wörterbuch der Marxistisch-Leninistischen Philosophie*, ed. by Buhr and Kosing (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1974), p. 141.

<sup>45</sup> Supposedly English, although they all speak German in the *Indianerfilme*.

<sup>46</sup> Evident in the following articles: 'Die Indianer aus dem Kaukasus: "Morgen" —Interview mit DEFA-Regisseur Dr. Gottfried Kolditz' (30.07.1967) *Der Morgen*; 'Der "Spur des Falken" folgen "Wiesse Wölfe"' (29.03.1968) *Bauernecho*; 'Gojko Mitic sitzt wieder im Sattel: Neue Abenteuer in "Spur des Falken"' (06.04.1968) *Nationalzeitung Berlin*; 'Sommer, Kino Freilichtbühne: Drei Beiträge der DEFA zu den Sommerfilmtagen' (30.06.1968) *Neues Deutschland*; 'Indianerbiwak im BMK Süd' (11.07.70) *Leipziger Volkszeitung*; 'Abenteuer, Aktion, Indianer?' (23.07.71) *Schweriner Volkszeitung* — to name but a few.

<sup>47</sup> 'Einschätzung des Films "Spur des Falken"', Filmwissenschaftliche Abteilung, 14.03.1968. DR 1 (BA-FA) Zulassungsprotokoll 284.

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