

**RESISTANCE MADE IN
HOLLYWOOD:**
**American Movies on Nazi Germany,
1939-1945**

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Introduction

The 1942 movie *Hitler—Dead or Alive* by American director Nick Grinde was inspired by dramatic historical events, the start of the Second World War in Europe with the Nazi occupation of Poland in September 1939. Grinde took on these events by directing a satirical farce, which was financed by Ben Judell Productions. The movie tells the fictional story of a wealthy American businessman, Samuel Thornton. He offers in the early days of the war a reward of one million dollars to bring the leader of Nazi Germany, Adolf Hitler, to justice, dead or



alive. Thornton hires three gangsters, ex-convicts released from Alcatraz prison, who join the Royal Canadian Air Force and hijack an aircraft to enter German airspace. Inside Nazi Germany, the group pose as musicians to gain access to Hitler. With the help of a young German woman and men of the German resistance movement, the gangsters capture Hitler in Berlin. When men of the *Schutzstaffel* (SS), the major paramilitary organization of the Nazi regime, discover them and try to break the door of the room where they hide with their captive Hitler, they quickly shave off his infamous mustache. As a result, the SS men, after entering the room, fail to recognize their leader and drag all the men, including Hitler, outside to be shot by a firing squad. The entire plot of this movie centers around the hunt of the three American gangsters for Adolf Hitler, who are supported by some “good” Germans in the resistance movement. The comical tone of the farce only changes in the final minutes, when the American

gangster, Steve Maschik, makes a passionate speech about the need to fight for liberty before being shot.¹

Hitler-Dead or Alive is one of the many Hollywood movies produced between 1939 and 1945 that respond to current events. After the start of World War II in the European war theater on 3 September 1939, American movies first tried to mobilize the public for the support of the struggle of the European allies, especially Britain, against Nazi Germany. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, and the German and Italian declaration of war against the US on 11 December 1941, the United States gave up their neutrality policy and joined the war against the Axis allies, Japan, Germany, and Italy.² Now, the production of American propaganda movies increased significantly, and Hollywood tried, in collaboration with the United States Office of War Information (OWI), a government agency operating from June 1942 until September 1945, to mobilize their own nation—soldiers and civilians—for war.³

Of the large number of American propaganda films produced between 1939 and 1945, a substantial group of films focused on Nazi Germany and the European countries it occupied during World War II. In this group of movies, the theme of resistance against Nazi Germany plays an important role, a fact that is overlooked so far by the research. Both the persecution and resistance inside Nazi Germany and in the occupied European territories are the subject of several Hollywood movies. The forms of resistance presented in these movies include a broad spectrum of activities from the printing and distribution of illegal leaflets and underground newspapers, to the hiding of persecuted people, the support of illegal rescue operations, flight

¹ “Hitler—Dead or Alive” (1942), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0034857/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1 (accessed: 9 October 2019).

² For a global overview of the history of World War II see, Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and for an overview of Nazi Germany, see Catherine Epstein, *Nazi Germany: Confronting the Myths* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

³ See Allan Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978).

and migration of people persecuted by the NS regime, sabotage, espionage, individual and collective terror attacks and partisan struggle.⁴

Until now, astonishingly little is known about this important group of propaganda movies focusing on the resistance against Nazi Germany that were produced in Hollywood during the Second World War. One reason surely is that after 1945 for a long-time resistance against Nazi Germany inside and outside of the Third Reich was no subject of Hollywood movies. If they recollected World War II, they focused on the heroic struggle of American soldiers against Japan and Nazi Germany in Europe, Africa, and Asia. “The Nazis” and “Hitler” became an ultimate antagonist that represented “the evil” in Hollywood movies during the second half of the twentieth century. They are the hate-inducing villains in adventures like the *Indiana Jones* movies (1981, 1989) and the deplorable characters of dramas like *Schindler's List* (1994). Filmmakers only have to give a character a swastika, and they are instantly more menacing and unsympathetic. Audiences are unfazed or even elated when Nazis are killed in movies. The cultural shorthand of the evil Nazi trope in cinema came to fruition while Nazism thrived throughout Germany and across Europe.⁵

This thesis explores the Hollywood movies on Nazism and Nazi Germany produced between 1939 and 1945. In my research, I identified 44 of these movies. Most of them are not war movies in a narrow sense, which usually focus on the military and war, campaigns and

4 See as overviews on the resistance inside Germany, David Clay Large, ed. *Contending with Hitler: Varieties of German Resistance in the Third Reich* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Michael Geyer and John W. Boyer, eds. *Resistance against the Third Reich, 1933-1990* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Frank McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Wayne Geerling and Gary Magee, *Quantifying Resistance: Political Crime and the People's Court in Nazi Germany* (Singapore: Springer, 2017); and Gordon Thomas and Greg Lewis, *Defying Hitler: The Germans Who Resisted Nazi Rule* (New York: Penguin, Random House 2019); for a broader overview of the research, see , Juliette Pattinson and Ben Shepherd, eds., *War in a Twilight World: Partisan and Anti-Partisan Warfare in Eastern Europe, 1939-45* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); and Viktoriia Khiterer and Abigail S. Gruber, eds., *Holocaust Resistance in Europe and America: New Aspects and Dilemmas* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).

5 See Sabine Hake, *Screen Nazis: Cinema, History, and Democracy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).

battles, soldiers, and officers. The majority of these movies focus instead on the home front inside Nazi Germany, and the territories occupied by the German Wehrmacht and resistance is one of the central themes. This observation leads to the four central questions of my study: *First*, with which aims did Hollywood make films focusing on Nazi Germany during World War II? What were the major genres and subjects of these movies? Why did the theme of resistance play such an important role? *Second*, who produced and directed the movies on resistance? What were the major genres and themes of these movies on resistance? Did both change between 1939 and 1945? *Third*, how did the movies on resistance portray the Nazis and other Germans and their opponents in the resistance? *Fourth*, what was the perception of these movies in their time?

The thesis argues that films focusing on resistance in Nazi Germany and Nazi occupied Europe released between 1939 and 1945 played an important role in the mobilization of the American public for war. After the start of World War II, major film studios became increasingly vocal about Nazism and created message pictures that centered around the threat of Nazi Germany and people's democratic duty to resist. Resistance films were the primary way for Hollywood studios to make movies about Nazi Germany. They could give people heroes and hope and offered filmmakers, therefore a way to make crowd-pleasing propaganda movies. Resistance movies helped to maintain morale and gave the American public motivation to support the war effort. Interestingly several of the directors and scriptwriters of the resistance movies came from Europe. The majority of European filmmakers that came to Hollywood after 1933 had to leave their home countries because of Nazi persecution.

Film scholars have thoroughly examined the history of Hollywood's movie production in general.⁶ Several studies focus in particular on American movies produced during the Second

⁶ As an introduction, see Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell, *Film History: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill; 3rd edition 2009); and Steven Mintz and Randy Roberts, *Hollywood's America: Twentieth-Century America through Film* (Chichester: Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); Jon Lewis, *American Film: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).

World War.⁷ The most important works are the 1990 volume *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* by Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black and the 1994 study *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II* by Robert Fyne.⁸ Both examine the entirety of the American World War II movies. These and other studies allow me to place my analysis of movies on Nazi Germany and the resistance against Nazi Germany inside and outside the Third Reich in the broader context of the Hollywood production of propaganda movies during World War II. Recently two studies by Nick A. Smedley and Gerd Gmünden also examined the role of émigré directors in Hollywood in the 1930s and 1940s. These works help me to contextualize my own finding on the national background of the filmmakers of resistance movies.⁹ There is also extensive research on war in international films¹⁰ and the representation of the Holocaust in movies that I draw upon.¹¹ Even the relation of Hollywood studios and Nazi Germany was the subject of three studies, David Welky's 2008 monograph *The Moguls and the Dictators. Hollywood and the Coming of World War II*, Thomas Doherty 2013 book *Hollywood and Hitler 1933-1939* and Ben Urwand's 2013 work *The Collaboration: Hollywood's Pact with Hitler*.¹²

7 See Colin Shindler, *Hollywood Goes to War: Films and American Society, 1939-1952* (London: Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1979); Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Robert L. McLaughlin and Sally E. Parry, *We'll Always Have the Movies: American Cinema during World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006); Robert Fyne, *Long Ago and Far Away: Hollywood and the Second World War* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2008); and Ralph Donald, *Hollywood Enlists!: Propaganda Films of World War II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017);

8 Koppes and Black, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*; and Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*.

9 Nick A. Smedley, *A Divided World: Hollywood Cinema and Émigré Directors in the Era of Roosevelt and Hitler, 1933-1948* (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2011); and Gerd Gemünden, *Continental Strangers: German Exile Cinema, 1933-1951* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

10 For example, Robert T. Eberwein, *The War Film* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004); Michael Paris, *Repicturing the Second World War: Representations in Film and Television* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); and James Chapman, *War and Film* (London: Reaktion, 2008).

11 Henry Gonshak, *Hollywood and the Holocaust* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015); and Mercedes Maroto Camino, *Memories of Resistance and the Holocaust on Film* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

12 David Welky, *The Moguls and the Dictators. Hollywood and the Coming of World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood and Hitler 1933-1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013); and Ben Urwand, *The Collaboration: Hollywood's Pact with Hitler*

The representation of on-screen Nazism from the 1930s until today, however, is so far only the subject of one English monograph, Sabine Hake's 2012 book *Screen Nazis: Cinema, History, and Democracy*, which provides an overview of the portrayal of Nazis and Nazism in cinema until the present.¹³ She analyses the political functions of the numerous, invariably negative representations of Nazism in European and American fiction films since the 1940s, continuing through the anti-Nazi films made in West and East Germany during the Cold War, the eroticized "retro" films about Nazism made in Italy during the 1970s, all the way to European and American portrayals of Nazis in the current, "post-ideological" era since the fall of communism in the early 1990s. This study, especially its sophisticated introduction on theory and methodology and its first chapter on the movies produced during World War II, is very helpful for my study. It guides my film analysis and provides historical context for my more specific analysis of resistance movies.¹⁴

Until now, no study exists that analyses the representation of resistance against Nazi Germany inside the Third Reich and the occupied territories in Hollywood movies produced during the Second World War. This thesis is an important contribution to the research on Hollywood movies on Nazi Germany. Its focus will be on the analysis of American movies set in Nazi Germany and occupied Europe. It centers on the European theatre rather than the Pacific theatre of World War II. A comparison with movies produced during the conflict that focuses on the portrayal of the German ally Japan would be a very interesting concept to explore. Robert Fyne and other film historians observed that a more radical form of racism influences the portrayal of the Japanese in American propaganda movies produced during World War II. They depicted Germans still as human and only dehumanized the Nazis. In the

(Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013).

¹³ Hake, *Screen Nazis*; also Geoffrey Cocks, "Hollywood über Allies: Seeing the Nazi in American Movies," *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 45, no. 1 (2015): 38-53.

¹⁴ A helpful introduction into the methodological approach of film analysis is, James Monaco, *How to Read a Film. Movies, Media, and Beyond: Art, Technology, Language, History, Theory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, 4th ed., completely rev. and expanded).

movies on Nazi Germany, all Nazis were Germans, but not all Germans were Nazis. A similar distinction did not exist for the Japanese characters in American propaganda movies produced during World War II. For Fyne, the Japanese were thus reduced to “two-dimensional caricatures of hate and destruction” in Hollywood movies.¹⁵ “Good Germans” and more nuance can be found in movies about Nazi Germany released from 1939 to 1945, especially in movies that focus on the theme of resistance.

One important reason for this different portrayal of the German and Japanese enemy was the importance of German-Americans compared to Japanese-Americans in the US population, which reached a total of 130 million total in 1940: 1.2 million persons identified as being of German birth, 5 million persons had both parents born in Germany, and 6 million persons had at least one parent born in Germany. Between 1931 and 1940, 114,000 Germans moved to the United States, many of whom were Jewish Germans or anti-Nazis fleeing government oppression. In addition, 300,000 German-born resident aliens who had German citizenship lived in 1940 in the United States.¹⁶ These millions of German-Americans were one reason for Hollywood’s relative reluctance to completely demonize Germans in World War II propaganda. In contrast, by 1940, there were less than 120,000 Japanese-Americans.¹⁷ Racism and lack of influence because of small population numbers within the US made the Japanese a less controversial villain in American propaganda films.

The two main groups of primary sources for this thesis are the movies themselves and their reviews in contemporary newspapers and magazines. For this thesis, I built a database with 44 movies released between 1939 and 1945 by Hollywood that focus on Nazi Germany and its occupation of European countries. This database includes next to the title, production

¹⁵ Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 35.

¹⁶ “German and German Americans,” in Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983), 238-293, 289.

¹⁷ Kashima Tetsuden, *Judgment without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment during World War II*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 124.

company and year of release, information on the director(s), their country of origin, the writer(s) and screenplay writer(s), the main actors, the length, and the genre and the plot. Notably, the themes in this group of 44 films that I analyze were also present in war movies set outside of Germany. For example, the enduring classic *Casablanca* (1942) is based in what was at the time French Morocco. They share several of the tropes that I identified in my analysis.¹⁸

For the finding of the films for this database, I relied heavily on online databases, like the *Internet Movie Database* (IMDb), *Letterboxd*, and *Film Index International*. The latter, I especially used to find the plot summaries of films released during World War II. This was necessary because titles of films were helpful to identify relevant movies, as many had easily identifiable titles like *I Escaped from the Gestapo* (1943) or *The Hitler Gang* (1944), but several other films set in Nazi Germany had titles that were not as recognizable, like *Four Sons* (1940) or *Once Upon A Honeymoon* (1942). To be able to identify such films as well for my database, the archival records of the main Hollywood studios were helpful. Other films I discovered through intentional Google searching of film subjects along with the year that they were released. Here *IMDb* and *Letterboxd* were effective resources, especially for finding more obscure B movies. *Film Index International* proved useful as it is a major information resource for entertainment films and personalities produced in collaboration with the British Film Institute.

In addition, I mined the scholarship on American film propaganda during World War II. The posters of the films themselves also contributed to the database. Robert Fyne's *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, like many of its companion works, contained a film index. Furthermore, posters of films released between 1939 and 1945 on *Letterboxd*, were indications about the plot of the films. For example, on the poster of *None Shall Escape* (1944),

¹⁸ Therefore, *Casablanca* does not meet the geographic criteria of the datafile.

a young woman is forcibly held by men with swastika clad uniforms. Finding the films with specific geographic and subject-matter criteria was a challenging, time-consuming, but important part of my research. So far, no database on the Hollywood movies from 1939 to 1945 focusing on Nazi Germany and Nazi occupied Europe exists.

For the study of the perception of the movies, I analyzed reviews in several contemporary newspapers and magazines including the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, the *Daily Boston Globe*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* (London), the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *New York Times*, *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), *The Washington Post* and *Variety Film Reviews*. In addition, I tried to get information about their distribution and box office success by exploring secondary literature and online databases like the Internet Movie Database.

The structure of the thesis follows the logic of my four main research questions. The first chapter on “Hollywood, Nazi Germany and World War II” provides the necessary historical context and is based on the discussed secondary literature. The second chapter on “American Movies on Nazi Germany and Occupied Europe during World War II” presents the main results of the analysis of my database as a whole. The third chapter on “Resistance: A Major Theme of Hollywood Movies on Nazi Germany during World War II,” analyses seven of the resistance movies in more detail. I selected films that focus on Nazi Germany itself and the territory occupied by the Third Reich already before the Second World War in Europe officially started, Austria and Czechoslovakia. I focus on films that were produced in different years of the war from 1939 to 1944. These movies are *Hitler--Beast of Berlin* (1939) by director Sam Newfield, *Mortal Storm* (1940) by director Frank Borzage, *Underground* (1941) by director Vincent Sherman, *Berlin Correspondent* (1942) by director Eugene Forde, *Hitler's Madman* (1943) by director Douglas Sirk, *Hangmen Also Die!* (1943) by director Fritz Lang, and *The Seventh Cross* (1944) by director Fred Zinnemann. In the conclusion, I will come

back to the main question of my thesis, why the theme of resistance plays such an important role in Hollywood movies produced during World War?

1. Hollywood, Nazi Germany, and World War II

The Golden Age of Hollywood from 1917 to 1960 conjures up instant imagery of glamour, entertainment, and movie stars. The stories of the movies captured the American imagination and created an American cultural lexicon that will never occur in the same way again. Americans were shaped by Hollywood, and Hollywood was influenced by global politics. The Second World War was one crucial period that shaped Hollywood's movie production. Its studios produced hundreds of propaganda films, especially between 1942 and 1945, the years the United States was directly involved in the Second World War, but a small number of movies thematized Nazi Germany and the war it had started in Europe in 1939 also before the American involvement in World War II in December 1941.

Until this point in time, the vast majority of Hollywood's studio bosses had supported the isolationist policy of the American government under U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt that he continued even after World War II had started in Asia and Europe.¹⁹ Only a small minority of studio bosses and filmmakers in Hollywood were vocally anti-Nazi. Especially the increasing number of screenplay writers, directors, and actors who had to migrate from Europe demanded more movies against the Nazis and their occupation of more and more countries on the European continent. These first anti-Nazi movies led later to the perception that Hollywood

¹⁹ Jennifer Frost, "Dissent and Consent in the 'Good War': Hedda Hopper, Hollywood Gossip, and World War II Isolationism," *Film History: An International Journal* 22, no. 2 (2010): 170-81, 172.

started early with the production of films that supported an interventionist American politics during World War II. This was not the case. Instead, these early anti-Nazi movies increased tensions between Hollywood and the United States government, which responded with the attempt of increased censorship. But the production of early movies that tried to mobilize for the war support by portraying the dire reality inside Nazi Germany and the European countries occupied by the German Wehrmacht helped Hollywood to be prepared. When the United States went to war, Hollywood went to war too and with full gusto. The following chapter focuses on Hollywood's relations to Nazi Germany and its movie production before and during World War II to provide historical context for the movie analysis in the following two chapters.

1.1 Hollywood's Movie Production before 1942

Movie production was big business for Hollywood in the 1920s and 1930s. Most of Hollywood's movies were pure entertainment. They sold dreams to an international audience. The American film industry's initial neutrality towards Nazi Germany in the 1930s was, in large part, motivated by the economic relationship and dependency of Hollywood on the world market, including the large market of Europe to which many movies were sold since the 1920s. Over 35,000 theatres in Europe regularly showed American films, the largest number of them in German-speaking Central Europe. Until the late 1930s, Europe was crucial for the financial success of Hollywood productions. Forty percent of Hollywood's money was made outside of the US, most of it in Europe.²⁰ A question posed by the Production Code Administration's internal memo from December of 1938 puts Hollywood's dilemma of the 1930s succinctly,

²⁰ Koppes and Black. *Hollywood Goes to War*, 22.

“Are we (Hollywood) ready to depart from the pleasant and profitable course of entertainment to engage in propaganda?”²¹

Nevertheless, the economic relationship between Hollywood and Nazi Germany started to wither before the onset of World War II in Europe. Hollywood did not have to make films about Nazi Germany to have films banned by the Third Reich. The Nuremberg Race Laws from 15 September 1935, which dramatically increased the persecution of Jews inside Nazi Germany, banned all films with Jewish actors. To keep the German market, some Hollywood studios responded by avoiding the use of Jewish actors in lead roles in their own movie productions. Regardless, as a result of the Nuremberg Laws, the number of American films shown in Germany was cut to an average of 20 movies per year, much less than before.²² The three most important Hollywood studios that tried as long as possible to collaborate with the Third Reich, despite its racist film policy, were Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), founded in 1924, Paramount, founded in 1912, and 20th-Century Fox, founded in 1935.²³

With Germany’s occupation of Poland in September 1939 and the occupation of Denmark and Norway in April 1940 and Belgium, the Netherlands and France in May and June 1940, the continental European market, in general, was closed for Hollywood movies. On 17 August 1940, Germany banned all American films from all areas under its control. Italy followed the ban. American studios were shocked by the ban’s severity.²⁴ After August 1940, Hollywood was not held back by any market interests in Europe any longer. Nevertheless, its film moguls started only slowly to produce more political movies that thematized the war in Europe. According to Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D Black, of the 530 films released in 1940, only 27 were related to current political events.²⁵

²¹ Ibid., 17.

²² Ibid., 21.

²³ Ibid., 22.

²⁴ Ibid., 22.

²⁵ Ibid., 20. They found this number in a press release from the Production Code Administration (PCA) in

The main reason for this small number was the censorship by the American government. Already in 1934, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) established the Production Code Administration (PCA), a set of moral guidelines for movie production. With the PCA, a period of strict censorship started for Hollywood movies. All films had to be submitted to the PCA for approval before release. The PCA, popularly known as the Hays Code, addressed an enormity of societal taboos. It regulated the film industry to entertainment that was considered inoffensive to both domestic and international audiences. For this reason, the PCA also opposed anti-Nazi films. For the PCA chairman Will H. Hays the primary function of movies was entertainment, not politics. Accordingly, Hays declared in 1940, “There will be no cycle of ‘hate’ pictures.”²⁶

The majority of film producers in Hollywood avoided coming into conflict with the PCA, and thus stayed away from making political movies. Before the United States declared war against the Axis allies Japan and Germany, Hollywood films that supported the war against Germany and Japan in Europe and Asia were limited in number and a constant source of public controversy and tension between the film producers and the United States government. These conflicts led in 1941 even to an investigation by the US Senate on the Hollywood production of movies that tried to influence the American public to enter the Second World War. In the US Senate Subcommittee Hearings on Motion Picture and Radio Propaganda, Senator D. Worth Clark criticized Hollywood even for being “hypocritical” for making films against Nazi Germany and not doing the same by making movies against Soviet Russia under “Bloody Joe” Stalin. For Clark, Hollywood was “war-hawkish.” He claimed that the 17,000 American movie theaters had become “17,000 daily mass meetings of war.”²⁷ In short, Hollywood was accused

which the definition of “current political events” was vague, but did include the war in Europe.

²⁶ Urwand, *The Collaboration Hollywood's Pact with Hitler*, 210..

²⁷ Mintz and Roberts, *Hollywood's America*, 157; James E. McMillan, “Mcfarland and the Movies: The 1941 Senate Motion Picture Hearings,” *The Journal of Arizona History* 29, no. 3 (1988): 277-302; and John E. Moser, “‘Gigantic Engines of Propaganda’: The 1941 Senate Investigation of Hollywood,” *The Historian* 63, no. 4 (2001): 731-51.

of being reckless and willfully driving the country into war. The investigation hearings by the US Senate ceased only after the United States had joined the conflict.

But not all filmmakers followed the official policy of the US government and the Production Code Administration. Already during the 1930s, some were willing to take a risk and stance. Most important was Warner Brothers, one of the most influential movie companies founded in 1923 by the four Jewish brothers, Harry, Albert, Sam and Jack Warner. The

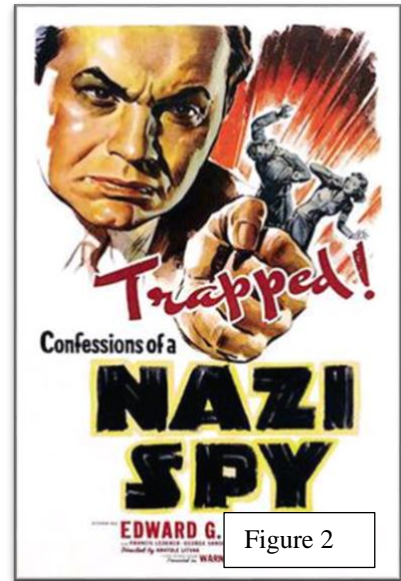


Figure 2

Warner brothers are one example of Jews in the United States, who tried to fight the widespread anti-Semitism with assimilation and fervent American patriotism, like many others. After the seizure of power of the Nazis in Germany in January 1933, they quickly condemned Nazism and its anti-Semitism and cut ties with Germany. In 1936 the Warner brothers even joined the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League (HANL), founded in Los Angeles to organize members of the American film industry to oppose fascism and Nazism. The HANL was the first American anti-Nazi organization that was not overtly linked to American Jews, and served “as the focal point of the [film] industry's anti-Nazism”²⁸ from 1936 through 1939.²⁹ The HANL claimed to have nearly 5,000 members.³⁰ The polarization between the majority of the studio heads, who did not support the HANL, and the minority of HANL supporters and members was evidence of a growing political divide within Hollywood. In the American film industry, like in society and politics, anti-Semitism found broad support during the 1920s to 1940s. Even Hitler’s racist and authoritarian Nazi regime was attractive for thousands of Americans.³¹ The German American

²⁸ Welky, *The Moguls and the Dictators*, 34.

²⁹ Mintz and Roberts, *Hollywood's America*, 157.

³⁰ Steven Alan Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History Up to World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 165.

³¹ See Bradley W. Hart, *Hitler's American Friends: The Third Reich's Supporters in the United States* (New

Fund, a pro-Nazi organization, established in 1936, claimed more than 200,000 members in 1939. Its main goal was to promote a favorable view of Nazi Germany.³²

Warner Brother Inc. was, however, also the only large studio that took the risk to produce movies against the official policy already in the late 1930s. It released the first major Hollywood film against National Socialism in May of 1939 under the title *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. The thriller, directed by Lithuanian-American filmmaker Anatole Litvak, focused on a Nazi spy ring in the United States.³³ *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* was a stark condemnation of National Socialism and presented it as the premier threat to democracy. The PCA accepted this film because, in 1938, the FBI did uncover a Nazi spy ring in the United States. Warner Brothers was able to make this movie with the PCA's approval because they could claim it was based on real events.³⁴ With this anti-Nazi movie, Warner Brother Inc. instigated not only a debate over whether or not Hollywood should comment on current world affairs, but also a trend of more political movies.

One of the most popular Anti-Nazi films that followed in 1940 was the political satire and comedy *The Great Dictator*, directed by the British filmmaker and actor Charly Chaplin and produced by Unites Artists (founded in 1919). Chaplin's film was a stirring condemnation of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Nazism, fascism and anti-Semitism. Chaplin played both leading roles: a ruthless fascist dictator and a persecuted Jewish barber. Chaplin's movie is also one of the rare exceptions that condemned not only Nazi Germany, but also Italy as one of its major allies. The movie includes an oafish dictator character called Napaloni, who is a veiled

York: St. Martin's Press, 2018).

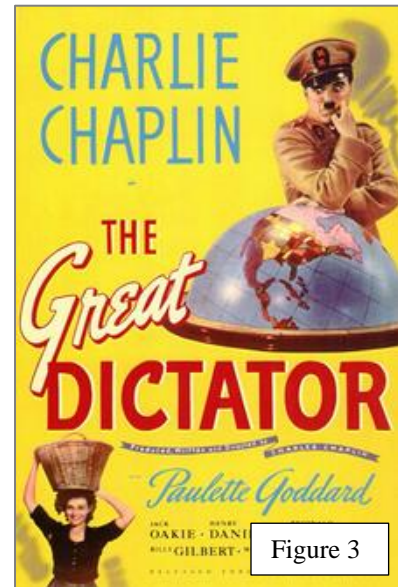
³² "German and German Americans," 288

³³ "Confessions of a Nazi Spy," (1939), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0031173/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1 (accessed: 11 December 2019).

³⁴ Fyne, *Long Ago and Far Away*, 14.

depiction of Mussolini. His Germany ally and counterpart is Hynkel, Hitler.³⁵ Even between 1942 and 1945, when the United States was involved in the conflict, the focus in the movies located in the European war theatre was on Nazi Germany. The war in Europe primarily meant for Hollywood, the fight against the Third Reich.

1.2 Hollywood's Movie Production, 1942-1945



Hollywood's avoidance of Germany and Nazism in the movies of the 1930s was partly an expression of American isolationism. After World War I, many Americans were suspect of hyper-nationalism and shared an anti-war stance. The America First Committee (AFC) was the premier non-interventionist pressure group, founded in September 1940 by Yale Law School student R. Douglas Stuart, Jr. along with other students, including future President Gerald Ford, future Peace Corps director Sargent Shriver, and future U.S. Supreme Court justice Potter Stewart. In 1942, it had a membership of 800,000. The AFC's message even included anti-Semitic rhetoric.³⁶

When at least some of Hollywood's filmmakers became more vocal about Nazism starting in 1939, a tension developed between Hollywood and the federal government. Before the United States entered the war in December of 1941, isolationism was a popular foreign policy. Isolationist Senator Gerald Nye, who was instrumental in the Neutrality Acts passed between 1935 and 1937, believed a Jewish conspiracy was pushing the United States into war. Hollywood movies on the war were openly considered manipulative propaganda. Before the

³⁵ "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" (1939), *IMDb*.

³⁶ Wayne S. Cole, *America First: The Battle against Intervention, 1940-41* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953).

United States entered the war, movies that supported the struggle of the European allies Britain, France, and the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany were highly controversial and intensively debated in American politics and the public.

After the US entered the war, the attitude of the government changed profoundly. Now it perceived movies as a necessary and uplifting propaganda medium that helped to reach millions of Americans. And indeed, Americans went in large numbers to the movies in the war years 1942 to 1945. Historians estimate that 90 million Americans out of a population of nearly 130 million watched films every week during the war.³⁷ Movies tried to mobilize for war support, but also distract from the miseries of war. Its actors inspired lifestyle and fashion in wartime.³⁸ Hollywood propaganda films that supported the American war effort became abundant, especially in 1943 and 1944, and the federal government valued Hollywood as a wartime asset. Already in the summer of 1942, Hollywood had under consideration or in production 213 films that thematized the war in one way or the other. In total, over 400 feature films were made about World War II by Hollywood between 1939 and 1945. President Roosevelt claimed that the motion picture was the most effective medium to inform the nation on the war and mobilize it for joining the war effort.³⁹

For this reason, his government established the Office of War Information (OWI) on 13 June 1942. The OWI Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP) collaborated with Hollywood to produce films that advanced American war aims. Successful films for the OWI depicted the Allied armed forces as valiant “Freedom fighters” and advocated for civilian war support.⁴⁰ The Office of War Information attempted to define what movies Hollywood could make about the war and encouraged the mass-production of war-related films. After the disastrous news of

³⁷ Ibid., 157.

³⁸ Mintz and Roberts, *Hollywood's America*, 156.

³⁹ Fyne, *Long Ago and Far Away*, 9.

⁴⁰ Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda*.

Pearl Harbor, the American public needed positive imagery about the war. The dark reality of the lives lost on 7 December 1941, did not produce morale for the war effort; it instead created despair and anger. The OWI wanted films that reaffirmed the faith in democracy and American victory.

The majority of films about World War II produced between 1942 and 1945 were war movies that did not address the enemy. Most films used the war only as a dramatic background for a drama, action romance, or comedy. Despite the



large number of movies Hollywood had under consideration or in production about the war, not more than 20 percent of movies about World War II dealt with the enemy.⁴¹ In general, American films about the Second World War were not limited to war films in a narrower sense; instead, filmmakers used almost any movie genre to make films on World War II. Even comedies and musicals used the war as a setting. The 1943 Columbia Picture film *The More the Merrier*, directed by George Stevens, for example, is a film that used the housing shortage of the wartime for a plot that causes a woman to move into an apartment with two men. Comedy then ensues.⁴² The 1944 musical *Rosie the Riveter* by Republic Pictures, directed by Joseph Santley, transformed the wartime factory work of women in a defense plant into a setting for song, dance, and romance.⁴³

Hollywood films produced during World War II spanned the spectrum in terms of quality and genre. Combat films were popular, but only one of many sub-genres. The most popular combat movies of the period focused on a group of ethnically and geographically

⁴¹ Mintz and Roberts, *Hollywood's America*, 159.

⁴² "Rosie the Riveter" (1944), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0037235/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1 (accessed 30 October 2019).

⁴³ *Ibid.*

diverse American soldiers and officers battling Nazis. They presented a well-crafted image of American exceptionalism that demonstrated the strength and honor of average American soldiers. The enemy, the German Wehrmacht soldiers, were depicted as formidable but not invincible. Combat films were crowd-pleasers that were a significant part of the war genre. One very popular example is *Action in the North Atlantic*, produced by Warner Brothers in 1943 and jointly directed by Lloyd Bacon, Byron Haskin, and Raoul Walsh. The movie



stars Humphrey Bogart and Raymond Massey as patriotic sailors in the U.S. Merchant Marines during World War II. It is a typical example of a morale boosting propaganda war film that focuses on action in battle, male heroism, and the camaraderie between American servicemen, sprinkled with some romance at the home-front.⁴⁴

Today the American films that are remembered from the era of the Second World War are combat movies like *Action in the North Atlantic*. The large number of movies produced between 1942 and 1944 for propaganda purposes conceal the historical reality that before the United States entered the war, the government did not like to see movies that mobilized the public for war. Hollywood's movie production before 1943 was informed by its global market interests, the isolationist foreign policy of the government, and the strict censorship of the Production Code Administration (PCA) that tried to prevent any "political" movie. Even when Nazi Germany banned all American movies in 1940 and the economic motive for on-screen isolationism disappeared, more movies that supported the struggle against Nazi Germany in Europe were not produced. This situation only changed after the United States joined the Allies

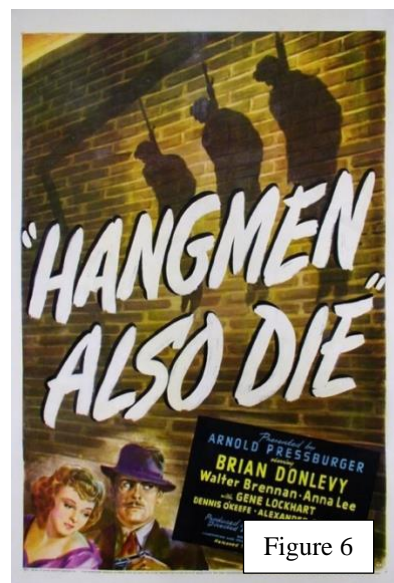
⁴⁴ "Action in the North Atlantic" (1943), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035608/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1 (accessed: 22 November 2019).

in their struggle against Germany, Japan, and Italy in December 1941. Now the American movie industry, with support from the US government and the Office of War Information, mobilized for war and produced more propaganda movies than in any era before or after World War II.

2. American Movies on Nazi Germany and Occupied Europe Produced Between 1939 and 1945

Hangmen Also Die!, a noir film directed by the Austrian-German director and producer Fritz Lang, was released in April 1943 by United Artists. Lang had to leave Nazi Germany in July 1933, six months after the Nazi Party's seizure of power. He was already a famous director when he came to Hollywood. His German productions included the groundbreaking futuristic *Metropolis* (1927) and the influential noir movie *M* (1931). His Hollywood career started with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) in 1936. The screenplay was written by John Wexley based on a story by the well-known leftist German dramaturg Bertolt Brecht, who also had to leave Nazi Germany after 1933, and Fritz Lang. The music for *Hangmen Also Die* was composed by another leftist migrant, Hanns Eisler, Brecht's collaborator on a number of plays with music they did together in Berlin before 1933.⁴⁵

Hangmen Also Die! tells the story of the assassination of the high-ranking German SS officer and a main architect of the



⁴⁵ "Fritz Lang," *Wikipedia*, at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fritz_Lang (accessed: 4 December 2019); "Bertolt Brecht," *Wikipedia*, at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertolt_Brecht (accessed: 2 December 2019); and "Hanns Eisler," *Wikipedia*, at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanns_Eisler (accessed: 2 December 2019).

Holocaust Reinhard Heydrich in Prague in June 1942 by the Czech resistance. Heydrich, who was also Deputy Reich-Protector (*Stellvertretender Reichsprotektor*) of Bohemia and Moravia, was ambushed by a group of Czech and Slovak soldiers who had been sent by the Czechoslovak government-in-exile to kill the Reich-Protector. The team was trained by the British Special Operations Executive. Heydrich died from his injuries a week later. In revenge for his death, the Nazi occupation forces razed the villages of Lidice and Ležáky; all men and boys over the age of 16 were shot, and all but a handful of the women and children were deported and killed in Nazi concentration camps. The story of the assassination of Heydrich, quickly became internationally known and was perceived as a success of the resistance movement.⁴⁶

Brecht and Lang used Heydrich's infamous nickname "Hangman" for the title of the movie, which was released less than a year after the events that inspired it. During the Second World War, especially after December 1941, when the United States officially was involved in the fighting, Hollywood was adept at making movies that reacted to and used real events for their war movies.⁴⁷ But *Hangmen Also Die!* stands out because it was written, directed, and produced by migrants who had to leave Nazi Germany. Brecht, Lang, and Eisler together created one of the most powerful films about resistance against Nazism by the American movie industry during World War II. *Hangmen Also Die* was nominated for two Academy Awards, for Hanns Eisler for "Best Music, Scoring of a Dramatic or Comedy Picture," and for Jack Whitney of Sound Services Inc. for "Best Sound, Recording."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ "Reinhard Heydrich: In Depth," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial, at <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/reinhard-heydrich-in-depth> (accessed: 1 December 2019); for further reading, see Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); and C. A. MacDonald, *The Assassination of Reinhard Heydrich* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2007).

⁴⁷ See for more chapter 1 of this thesis.

⁴⁸ "The 16th Academy Awards (1944) Nominees and Winners," *Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Oscars*, at <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/1944> (accessed 2 December 2019).

Hangmen Also Die! fits within and stands out of the group of 44 movies that I was able to identify in my research (see the overview in **Table 1** in the appendix).⁴⁹ *Hangmen Also Die!* was released by United Artist, one of the most vocal studios in the propaganda war against Nazi Germany, on 27 March 1943 for the premiere for the general public one month later.⁵⁰ It was one of the most political of the 44 movies, which are themselves only a small portion of all movies that Hollywood produced during World War II for propaganda purposes. The majority of these films were movies that did not address Nazi Germany and Nazism straight on and only used war as a dramatic background for a drama, action romance, or comedy. However, they all supposed to strengthen patriotism and the support of the war at home and at the frontlines.

Historian David E. Meerse estimates that more than 1,300 feature films were produced mainly in Hollywood for the global market between 1939 to 1945; 29 percent of them, or 374 films, had some connection with an aspect of war. Of these films, only 43 (12 percent) dealt with the question of why America was fighting the war, while 107 (29 percent) films dealt with the enemy. Of this latter group, the majority focused on the Axis powers, especially sabotage and espionage in the United States. A further 68 films (18 percent) dealt, according to Meese, with the American allies. He observes: “Although a large proportion again dealt with spies, saboteurs, and agents behind enemy lines, some of the best of Hollywood’s efforts ..., were among these films.” Only 21 films (6 percent) dealt with home front production of war materials, while an additional 40 (11 percent) depicted such home front wartime activities and problems as housing shortages, Red Cross work, and the duties of air-raid wardens. Ninety-five pictures (25 percent of directly war-related films), or 7 percent of all feature-length films, dealt with the traditional subject of war movies, the American fighting forces.⁵¹ Of the 107

⁴⁹ For my methodological approach of compiling this datafile please see my introduction.

⁵⁰ See for more chapter 1 of this thesis.

⁵¹ David E Meerse, “To Reassure a Nation: Hollywood presents World War II,” *Film & History* 6, no. 4

movies in total produced between 1939 and 1945 that dealt with the American enemies, 44 or 41 percent focused on Nazi Germany, Nazism and the Wehrmacht's occupation of Europe.⁵²

In the following, I will explore this group of 44 American movies on Nazi Germany and the European territories occupied by it during World War II. I will ask when these films were produced and released during the war by which studios and for what purpose? Which regions of Europe they focused on and what the major genres and subjects of these movies were? What themes and subgenres stand-out within the datafile's movies? In the end, I will ask why the theme of resistance played such an important role in this group of movies, which is was discovered in this research.

2.1 Release Years, Studios, and Directors

Most of the 44 American movies that focused on Nazi Germany and the territories occupied by the Germany Wehrmacht during World War II were produced between 1941 and 1944 (see **Table 2**). The movies released by Hollywood set in Nazi Germany and its occupied territories experienced an evolution over the course of the war. In 1939, movies about Nazi Germany and its occupied territories were rare. Two exceptions were the spy melodrama *Espionage Agent* (1939), directed by the American filmmaker Lloyd Bacon and produced by Warner Brothers, and the film *Hitler—Beast of Berlin* (1939) focusing on German resistance, directed by the American Sam Newfield and distributed by Producers Releasing Corporation (PRC). The number of movies increased in 1940 to six, but then declined to three films in 1941. One reason



(1976): 79-98, 82.

⁵² Mintz, and Roberts, *Hollywood's America*, 157.

for this was most likely the resistance from isolationist Washington politicians that film directors and producers faced to support the Allied struggle against Nazi Germany in Europe.

53

Only after December 1941, when the US finally joined the war against Germany and Japan, this policy did change. The US Office of War Information (OWI), which was established in June 1942, supported the production of propaganda movies in all possible ways. The OWI's influence was visible in the released movies of the analyzed group of 44 movies. The number of films increased each year: 1942 nine movies (21 percent of all 44 movies) came out, 1943 thirteen movies (30 percent), and 1944 eight movies (18 percent). In the last year of the war, a sharp decline occurred, only three films were set in Nazi Germany and its occupied territories. This sharp drop foreshadows the haste with which Hollywood's movie production changed the subject after victory and moved forward to more future-oriented themes of the postwar society.

Table 2: Year of release of the 44 American movies released between 1939 and 1945 set in Nazi Germany and the European territories it occupied

Year	Number of Films released	Percentage out of Total (44)
1939	2	4
1940	6	14
1941	3	7
1942	9	21
1943	13	30
1944	8	18
1945	3	7

The majority of the 44 Hollywood movies focusing on Nazi Germany and the occupied territories released between 1939 and 1945 were produced by the 'Big Five' studios of the 1930s and 1940s: RKO Radio Picture, Paramount Pictures, Warner Brothers, Metro-Goldwyn Mayer and 20th Century Fox.⁵⁴ Eight (18 percent) of the 44 movies were produced by MGM,

⁵³ See chapter 1.

⁵⁴ "Hollywood," *History.com. A&E Television Networks*, at <https://www.history.com/topics/roaring-twenties/hollywood>. (accessed: 1 December 2019).

seven (16 percent) each by Columbia Pictures and United Artists, six (14 percent) by RKO Radio Picture, and five (11 percent) each by Warner Brothers and Twentieth Century Fox. (See **Table 3**) The strong role of MGM is surprising because Warner Brothers studios was the most vocally anti-Nazi studio in Hollywood. Its 1939 production *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* was the first blatantly anti-Nazi film produced by a major Hollywood Studio. Not until a year later did MGM release its first anti-Nazi picture was *The Mortal Storm* (1940), directed by American-Italian filmmaker Frank Borzage. Until then, MGM was not willing to make movies critical of Nazism, because it hoped to sell its productions to the large German market. In June 1939, MGM's studio head Louis B. Mayer still had treated ten Nazi newspaper editors to a "good-will tour" of the studio.⁵⁵ MGM's policy only changed after the movie market of Nazi Germany was closed to it.⁵⁶ Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's transformation from a studio that collaborated with Nazi Germany to the studio that made the most films set in Nazi Germany and occupied Europe condemning Nazism is evidence of the rapid evolution that many studios undertook during World War II.

Next to the larger studios, smaller studios also played an important role in the production of Hollywood movies focusing on Nazi Germany and the occupied territories released between 1939 and 1945. The 1939 film *Hitler—Beast of Berlin*, for example, was a low-budget production by Producers Releasing Corporation (PRC), a "Poverty Row" studio. Poverty Row was a colloquial term for studios in the late 1920s through the mid-1950s that were short-lived low-budget companies that created B movies, which were generally shown with other films in double features at movie theatres. Regardless, B movies played a role in American propaganda film production during World War II. Unfortunately, many B movies have been lost with time. Thus, only two films in the group of 44 are B movies, next to *Hitler—*

⁵⁵ Urwand, *The Collaboration: Hollywood's Pact with Hitler*, 74.

⁵⁶ See chapter 1.

Beast of Berlin, the 1942 movie *Hitler Dead or Alive*, directed by the American filmmaker Nick Grinde and produced Ben Judell Productions. Major, but especially minor studios, have not preserved many of their low-budget pictures. If any movie was not included in the group of 44 movies, it is because, for whatever, reason a studio did not preserve the films.

Many of the studios that produced films on Nazi Germany and occupied Europe during World War II employed émigré directors who had fled first Germany and other European countries because of persecution. Seventeen, or 39 percent, of the 44 films were directed by European migrants (see **Table 1** in the **Appendix**). For example, the well-known left-liberal Austrian-German director Fritz Lang (1890-1976), left Germany in 1933 and migrated to the United States, and the German film director Douglas Sirk (1897-1987), left Nazi Germany in 1937 because his Jewish wife was persecuted by the Nazis. The two created some of the most powerful anti-Nazi films in 1943: The theme of both, Sirk's *Hitler's Madman* and Lang's *Hangmen Also Die!*, is the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in Prague. These two films are examples of how émigré directors used Hollywood to make movies about resistance movement against the Third Reich as an expression of their own resistance. Both Sirk and Lang were masterful directors. The overall talent filmmakers within the datafile possessed is impressive. Of course, émigré directors like Sirk and Lang also produced other movies in a variety of film genres and did not produce only war movies. But, movies set in Nazi Germany and occupied Europe seem to have been for émigré directors more personal. Their involvement made sure that the resistance movies, in which they were involved, often included more realistic depictions of the situation in Nazi Germany and the territories it had occupied during the war.

Table 3: Film Studios of American Films Released Between 1939-1945 Set in Nazi Germany and its Occupied Territories

Film Studio	Number of Films	Percentage out of Total (44)
Warner Brothers	5	11
Columbia Pictures	7	16
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	8	18
Paramount Pictures	2	5
RKO Pictures	6	14
Universal Pictures	2	5
United Artists	7	16
Twentieth Century-Fox	5	11
Ben Judell Productions/Producers Picture Corporation	2	5

2.2 Regional Settings and Covered Time Periods

For Hollywood's film directors and producers, the European war theatre was about the fight against Nazi Germany, not about Italy or any other ally of the two fascist countries. This is evident in the number of films that were set in Nazi Germany in the database (see **Table 4** and **6**). Twenty-three of the 44 films (53 percent) were set in Nazi Germany. These movies heavily commented on Nazi Germany and Nazism and contained mostly German characters. The 1941 film *Underground* is the only American movie that focuses only on Germans. The noir film about the German resistance against the Nazis was directed by American Vincent Sherman and produced by Warner Brothers.

Other films set in Nazi Germany like the 1942 production by Warner Brother, *Desperate Journey*, directed by American film director Raoul Walsh, and the 1942 film *Hitler—Dead or Alive*, introduced American characters in the plot, who for various reasons stayed in Nazi Germany. An especially popular movie of this type was the 1942 comedy

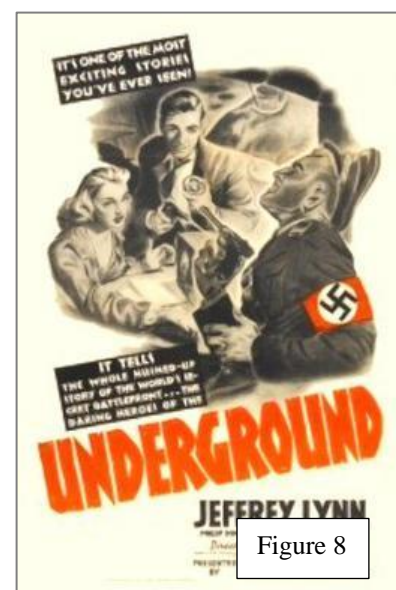


Figure 8

Berlin Correspondent by American film director Eugene Forde, distributed by 20th Century Fox. It and similar movies were popular as they told stories of relatable Americans coming into conflict with Nazism. Next to Nazi Germany, most movies on the European territories occupied by the Wehrmacht were located in Austria, Czechoslovakia and France. Many fewer movies focused on other parts of Western, Northern or Eastern Europe (see **Table 4** and **6**)



Figure 9

Ambiguity in the regional setting of the movies focusing on Nazi occupied Europe was a recurring choice for filmmakers in Hollywood during the Second World War. Four of the 44 films (nearly 10 percent) were set in an unclear, but apparently Eastern European country (see **Table 4**). One example is *This Land Is Mine* (1943) by French film director Jean Renoir, distributed by RKO Radio Pictures. *Letterbox* described the plot focusing on a resistance group that tries to kill the “German commandant Major von Keller,” “Somewhere in Europe, in a city occupied by the Nazis.”⁵⁷ Another example is *Counter-Attack* (1945), directed and produced by the Hungarian filmmaker Zoltan Korda and distributed by Columbia Pictures. The film is located somewhere at the Eastern frontlines between German and Soviet troops. The unclear regional setting gave films not only a sense of supranationalism, but also created the impression that all nations of Europe oppressed by Nazism wanted to fight the Third Reich. This vague setting technique was an effective device to make a film relatable to the American audience,



Figure 10

⁵⁷ “This Land Is Mine (1943),” *Letterboxd*. at <https://letterboxd.com/film/this-land-is-mine/>. (accessed 9 December 2019).

which most likely did not have much knowledge of the geography and political landscape of contemporary Europe.

Table 4: Regional setting of the 44 American movies released between 1939 and 1945 set in Nazi Germany and the European territories it occupied

Regional Setting	Number of Films	Percentage out of Total (44)
Germany	23	53
Austria	4	9
Czechoslovakia	4	9
France	4	9
Norway	2	5
Ukraine	1	2
Soviet Union	1	2
Poland	1	2
Unnamed Eastern European Country	2	5
Unnamed European Country/Countries	2	5

Filmmakers chose to let the audience interpret the location of the movie. Making the regional setting of a film vague helped to the film's plot could happen anywhere. Most of the Hollywood movies on Nazi Germany and the European territories it occupied focus on the prewar or war years. Since 1942, the Office of War Information and Hollywood were determined to create movies that commented on current events and inspired average Americans to support the war effort. Of the 44 movies, 26 (51 percent) focused on the war period and only 14 (39 percent) on the prewar period before 1939. Four (9 percent) described the transition from prewar to wartime. (See **Table 5**).

Table 5: Time period of the 44 American movies released between 1939 and 1945 set in Nazi Germany and the European territories it occupied

Time Period	Number of Films	Percentage out of Total (44)
Prewar (before 1939)	15	34
War (1939-1945)	26	59
Prewar/War	3	7

All of the movies that concentrated on the prewar period were set in Nazi Germany. The earliest two of these movies were *Espionage Agent* and *Hitler—Beast of Berlin*, which were both released in 1939 (see **Table 6**). These two movies are full of foreshadowing of the war soon to come. Another early example of this is the 1940 movie *The Mortal Storm*. The film shows the general impact of the Nazi’s rise to power in January 1933 upon the people in a quaint Southern German town bordering Switzerland, and in particular, on one educated Jewish-German upper-middle-class family, the Roths. The center of the movie is a love triangle between two young men, one of them a Nazi, and the daughter of the Roth family. It demonstrates not only the early Nazi persecution of Jews and how Nazi ideology destroyed human feelings and relations, but also the willingness of a minority of “good Germans” to resist.

After the United States joined the struggle of the allies against Nazi Germany, some movies on the prewar period became even more explicit and political. One example is the 1944 pseudo-documentary *The Hitler Gang*, which tried to explain the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party from the end of World War I until its seizure of power in January 1933. The film was directed by the Australian-born American filmmaker John Farrow and produced by Paramount Pictures, which labeled *The Hitler Gang* as a “documentary-propaganda” film based on extensive research.⁵⁸ Rather than simply referring to Hitler and the Nazi party like in *The Mortal Storm* and other films set in the prewar era, *The Hitler Gang* tells the story of the rise of Hitler

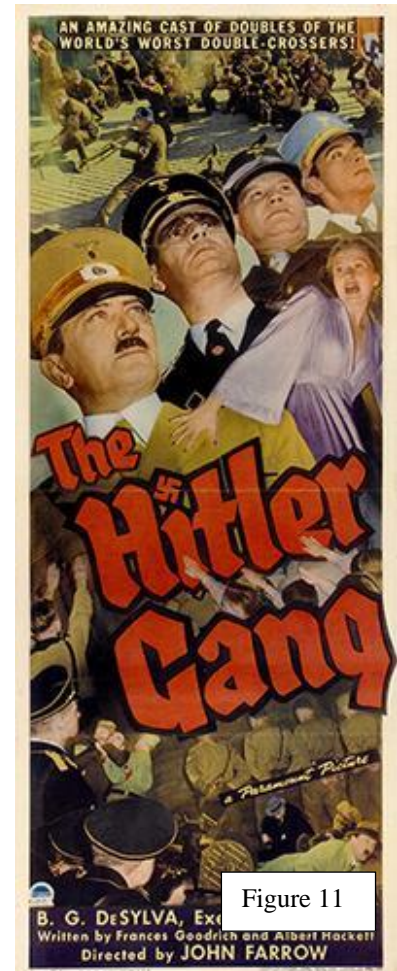


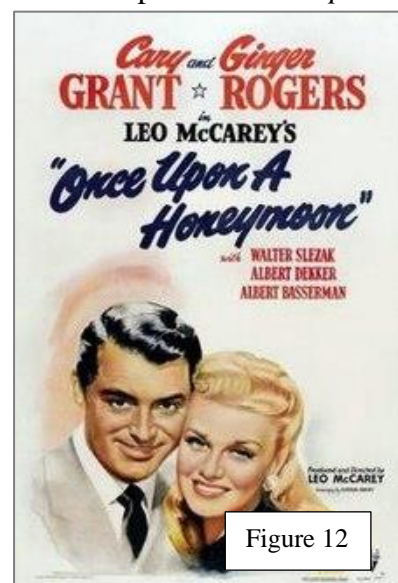
Figure 11

⁵⁸ “The Hitler Gang,” *Wikipedia*, at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hitler_Gang (accessed: 4 December 2019).

and his party by having actors portray Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler, etc. This film stands out as a serious political drama that mirrors in its style of noir gangster movies of the 1940s. Accordingly, Hitler is portrayed as a thuggish mob-boss type. The film follows him as the central character from the last year of World War I until he became Chancellor of Germany.

Most of the Hollywood movies on Nazi Germany and the European countries occupied by the Wehrmacht focus on the war period between 1939 and 1944. Exemplary films that were successful at the box office include *Berlin Correspondent*, *Hangman also Die!* or *The Cross of Lorraine* (1944). The latter movie was directed by the American filmmaker and writer Tay Garnett and produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. It is a war film about French prisoners of war escaping a German prison camp and joining the French Résistance. The title refers to the French Cross of Lorraine, which was the symbol of the Résistance and the Free French Forces that had been chosen by its leader General Charles de Gaulle in 1942. *The Cross of Lorraine* was the second MGM production about the French Resistance, the first was *Reunion in France* (1942), directed by American filmmaker Jules Dassin, whose parents were both Jewish immigrants from Odessa, in modern-day Ukraine.

Only a small group of four movies covered both, the prewar and war-period. *Once Upon a Honeymoon* (1942), directed and produced by American filmmaker Leo McCarey and distributed by RKO Radio Pictures is one example. The romantic comedy/drama starts before World War II and follows the American burlesque dancer Katherine O'Hara, who focuses all her energy on climbing the social ladder. When she marries the influential Austrian Baron Franz von Luber, she seemingly has it made, but von Luber is not the man pretends to be. He is actually a high-ranking Nazi.



Suspecting his ties to the Nazi Party, American foreign correspondent Patrick O'Toole convinces Katherine to spy on her husband to help the Allies' war effort. The film begins in Austria and ends in France with Katherine abandoning her Nazi husband after spying on him for the French resistance. The tagline of the film ended with the phrase "... all-out love against a flaming background of all-out war!" The movie is a creative example of how filmmakers used the war and the subject of resistance to frame a story full of romance, comedy and music. It is also an instance of the creative mix of genres by writers and directors who wanted to reach broad audiences. Movies had to offer something for men and women, old and young, to be successful.

Table 6: Overview of the regional setting and covered time period of all 44 American movies released between 1939 and 1945 set in Nazi Germany and the European territories it occupied

Release Year	Title	Regional Setting	Time Period: Prewar (before 1939) or wartime (1939-1945)
1939	<i>Espionage Agent</i>	Germany	prewar
1939	<i>Hitler—Beast of Berlin</i>	Germany	prewar
1940	<i>The Mortal Storm</i>	Germany	prewar
1940	<i>Four Sons</i>	Czechoslovakia	wartime
1940	<i>The Man I Married</i>	Germany	wartime
1940	<i>Foreign Correspondent</i>	Germany	prewar
1940	<i>The Great Dictator</i>	Unnamed Germany	prewar
1940	<i>Escape</i>	Germany	prewar
1941	<i>So Ends Our Night</i>	Austria, greater Europe	prewar
1941	<i>They Dare Not Love</i>	Austria, London	prewar
1941	<i>Underground</i>	Germany	wartime
1942	<i>To Be or Not to Be</i>	Poland	wartime
1942	<i>They Raid by Night</i>	Norway	wartime
1942	<i>Invisible Agent</i>	Germany	wartime
1942	<i>Berlin Correspondent</i>	Germany	wartime
1942	<i>Desperate Journey</i>	Germany, greater Europe	wartime
1942	<i>Hitler—Dead or Alive</i>	Germany	prewar
1942	<i>Once Upon A Honeymoon</i>	Greater Europe (Austria, Poland, France, etc.)	prewar/wartime
1942	<i>Reunion in France</i>	France	wartime
1942	<i>Commandos Strike at Dawn</i>	Norway	wartime
1943	<i>Edge of Darkness</i>	Norway	wartime
1943	<i>Hitler's Children</i>	Germany	prewar
1943	<i>The Moon is Down</i>	Norway	wartime
1943	<i>Hangmen Also Die!</i>	Czechoslovakia	wartime
1943	<i>Above Suspicion</i>	Germany	prewar
1943	<i>This Land is Mine</i>	General Europe	wartime
1943	<i>Hitler's Madman</i>	Czechoslovakia	wartime
1943	<i>Appointment in Berlin</i>	Germany	prewar

1943	<i>Bomber's Moon</i>	Germany	wartime
1943	<i>Hostages</i>	Czechoslovakia	wartime
1943	<i>The Strange Death of Adolf Hitler</i>	Germany	prewar/wartime
1943	<i>Paris After Dark</i>	France	wartime
1943	<i>The North Star</i>	Ukraine	wartime
1944	<i>The Cross of Lorraine</i>	France	wartime
1944	<i>Passport to Destiny</i>	Germany	wartime
1944	<i>None Shall Escape</i>	Germany	prewar/wartime
1944	<i>Song of Russia</i>	Soviet Union	wartime
1944	<i>The Hitler Gang</i>	Germany	prewar
1944	<i>Address Unknown</i>	Germany	prewar
1944	<i>The Black Parachute</i>	Unnamed Balkan country	wartime
1944	<i>The Seventh Cross</i>	Germany	prewar
1945	<i>Hotel Berlin</i>	Germany	wartime
1945	<i>Counter-Attack</i>	Unnamed Eastern Europe	wartime
1945	<i>Paris Underground</i>	France	wartime

2.3 Genres and Major Themes

Fitting to the subject of the movies on Nazi Germany and the European territories the Wehrmacht occupied, 36 of the 44 films are dramas (see **Table 7**). Dramas are serious, plot-driven films that depict realistic situations, settings, and characters. In a drama, the focus is not on comedy, action, romance, etc., though all of these elements can exist within it.⁵⁹ The 1940 movie *The Mortal Storm* is a typical example of a drama that also includes romance. Thrillers were the second most popular genre that Hollywood used to make films on Nazi Germany and occupied Europe. Eleven of the 44 films were thrillers. This genre is known to incorporate intense suspense, excitement, or anticipation. Thrillers' plots contain rising tension throughout much of the film, usually driven by a dangerous escape or mission.⁶⁰ The 1942 film *Berlin Correspondent* is a prime example of the thriller genre among the Hollywood propaganda movies during World War II. The main figure is an American radio correspondent stationed in Berlin who eventually has to escape Germany. But like many movies, these films also cannot do without romance.

⁵⁹ "Drama Films" *amc filmsite*, at <https://www.filmsite.org/dramafilms.html> (accessed: 2 December 2019).

⁶⁰ "Thriller—Suspense Films," *amc filmsite*, at <https://www.filmsite.org/thrillerfilms.html> (accessed: 2 December 2019).

Table 7: Genres by year and in total of the 44 American movies released between 1939 and 1945 set in Nazi Germany and the European territories it occupied

Year	Total Number	Drama	Thriller	War	Comedy	Romance	Action	Mystery	Science Fiction	Music
1939	2	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
1940	6	4	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
1941	3	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
1942	9	5	2	3	3	2	1	0	1	0
1943	13	13	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
1944	8	7	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
1945	3	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	44	36	11	7	5	5	2	1	1	1

Note: The table counts one movie in more than one genre if it is a genre-mix.

War films, in the classic sense with a focus on combat, are few in the datafile with only seven films. This genre's focus on military action and battles in the air, on the oceans and on land, made them costly.⁶¹ The 1942 movie *Commandos Strike at Dawn* by Australian-born American film director John Farrow, which was produced and distributed by Columbia Picture, is one example. The script was written by Irwin Shaw based on a short story entitled "The Commandos" by C.S. Forester that appeared in *Cosmopolitan Magazine* in June 1942. The film tells the story of an Allied air raid on a secret airstrip the Germans were building on the Norwegian coast. The film was shot in the Greater Victoria area in Canada with the support of the Canadian Army, which provided a large number of troops as well as military equipment while the Royal Canadian Airforce provided the aircraft shown in the movie. The ship used in the film was HMCS Prince David (F89) a former CN Steamship which had been converted to an Armed Merchant Cruiser in 1940. These details demonstrate some of the



Figure 13

⁶¹ "War Films," *amc filmsite*.

challenges of the production of “real” war movies in wartime.⁶²

Other genres like comedy and romance were also popular in Hollywood during World War II, but had much less importance in the selected sample (see **Table 7**). Films like the black comedy *To Be or Not to Be*, directed and produced by the German-American filmmaker Ernst Lubitsch and distributed by United Artist in 1942, were an exception. The plot of *To Be or Not to Be* focuses on a group of actors in Nazi occupied Warsaw who use their abilities in acting and disguise to fool the occupying German troops. It was adapted by Lubitsch and Edwin Justus Mayer from a story by Melchior Lengyel. The movie used the dark nature of the war and Nazi occupation to heighten the comedy and create intense contrasts.⁶³ Another example with a similar approach is the romantic comedy *Once Upon a Honeymoon* that uses the perils of World War II to create obstacles for the romantic love interests. Science fiction, mysteries, and musicals are anomalies within the group of selected movies. Nevertheless, the mere presence of films from genres that are unexpected choices for movies in Nazi Germany and the European territories it occupied shows Hollywood’s creativity during World War II.

Some of the films on Nazi Germany and occupied Europe produced between 1939 and 1945 incorporated documentary footage to add realism to the manufactured war that Hollywood produced through soundstages in California. Documentaries were in general a very popular medium of the time. Acclaimed director Frank Capra, who would go on to make the beloved postwar Christmas movie *It’s a Wonderful Life* in 1946, filmed in 1942 the well-known documentary *Why We Fight: Prelude to War*. It was commissioned by the Office of War Information and George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the War Department, to convince

⁶² “Commandos Strike at Dawn,” *Wikipedia*, at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commandos_Strike_at_Dawn (accessed 5 July 2019).

⁶³ “To Be or Not to Be (1942 Film),” *Wikipedia*, at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_Be_or_Not_to_Be_\(1942_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/To_Be_or_Not_to_Be_(1942_film)) (accessed 5 December 2019)

American troops of the necessity of combating the Axis powers during the Second World War.

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The major themes of the large group of dramas on Nazi Germany and the European territories it occupied during World War II were the related subjects of persecution by the Nazis and resistance against them (see **Table 8**). Hollywood made a variety of films about persecution in Nazi Germany pre-1939. These movies varied in their detail about who was persecuted by the Third Reich. The 1940 film *The Mortal Storm*, for example, never used the word “Jew” or “Jewish”; instead, the members of the persecuted German-Jewish Roth family are described as “Non-Aryan.” While in other movies, for example, the 1941 film *So Ends Our Night*, directed by the American filmmaker John Cromwell and distributed by United Artists, the persecuted characters are explicitly labelled “Jewish.” The script of this movie was based on the 1939 novel *Flotsam* by the internationally well-known German writer Erich Maria Remarque, the author of the 1929 anti-war novel *Nothing New on the Western Front*, which was made into a very successful, but contested, Hollywood movie in 1931. Remarque had to leave Germany with his family in 1933 first for Switzerland and in 1939 for the United States.⁶⁵ Before 1942 inclusion of the persecution of Jews in film was a personal and political choice made by the filmmakers. It became more common for movies about the Third Reich and Nazism to explicitly address anti-Semitism and the persecution of Jews or political opponents of the Nazis between 1942 and 1945, when the censorship was lifted by the government.

⁶⁴ Frank Capra. *The Name Above the Title: An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1971).

⁶⁵ “So Ends Our Nights” (1941), *Wikipedia*, at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/So_Ends_Our_Night (accessed: 5 December 2019).

Table 8: Main subjects of the 30 American drama films released between 1939 and 1945 set in Nazi Germany and the European territories it occupied

Main subjects of drama films	Films
Persecution inside Nazi Germany before World War II	<i>The Mortal Storm</i> (1940) <i>Escape</i> (1940) <i>So Ends Our Night</i> (1941) <i>Hitler's Children</i> (1943) <i>Seventh Cross</i> (1944)
Resistance inside Nazi Germany before World War II	<i>Hitler—Beast of Berlin</i> (1939) <i>The Mortal Storm</i> (1940) <i>Escape</i> (1940)
Resistance inside Nazi Germany during World War II	<i>Underground</i> (1941) <i>The Strange Death of Adolf Hitler</i> (1943) <i>Hotel Berlin</i> (1945)
Resistance against the Nazi occupation during World War II	<i>To Be or Not to Be</i> (1942) <i>They Raid by Night</i> (1942) <i>Commandos Strike at Dawn</i> (1942) <i>Edge of Darkness</i> (1942) <i>The Moon is Down</i> (1943) <i>Hangmen Also Die!</i> (1943) <i>Hitler's Madman</i> (1943) <i>Hostages</i> (1943) <i>Paris After Dark</i> (1943) <i>The North Star</i> (1943) <i>The Cross of Lorraine</i> (1943) <i>None Shall Escape</i> (1944) <i>Song of Russia</i> (1944) <i>The Black Parachute</i> (1944) <i>Paris Underground</i> (1945)
Americans in Nazi Germany during World War II	<i>Berlin Correspondent</i> (1942) <i>Desperate Journey</i> (1942) <i>Hitler—Dead or Alive</i> (1942) <i>Bomber's Moon</i> (1943)

In general, it is remarkable how many of the 44 movies on Nazi Germany and its occupied territories during World War II focused on the subject of resistance. This theme spans time periods, regional settings, and genres. Stories of resistance in prewar and wartime Germany and the resistance movement in counties occupied by German Wehrmacht seem to have been very popular. Movies with such a thematic focus were a way to portray the successful struggle of everyday people in Europe, including some “good Germans” fighting Nazism. Such stories conveyed hope and helped to create sympathy for the cause of the liberation struggle of far away on the other side of the Atlantic.

3. “Resistance” in Hollywood Movies on Nazi Germany Produced during World War II

1942 was an important year of change in Hollywood’s movie production. After the United States joined the Allies in December 1941 in their struggle against Italy, Japan and Nazi Germany, movies were now intensively used for war propaganda. Films about the war released before 1942 by Hollywood were more controversial and received a lot of criticism from the government and the public. But they were also projects produced with more passion than the later assembly-line propaganda productions in collaboration with the United States government. The theme of resistance was the main subject many of the films produced between 1939 and 1945 that focus on Nazi Germany and the European territories occupied by the Wehrmacht, but especially of the early ones. In the following, I will introduce some of the most important and interesting films made on resistance inside Nazi German and Czechoslovakia, which was already occupied by the Nazis before the Second World War was officially started by the Third Reich and study their contemporary perception in more detail. First, the seven selected exemplary resistance movies produced between 1939 and 1945 will be introduced in more detail. Then, the analysis will focus on the three major themes in these resistance movies: the images of Nazis and Nazism, the depiction of resistance, and representations of class, gender and race. Finally, the perception of the selected resistance movies in contemporary film critique and major journals and new papers will be explored.

3.1 Resistance Movies Made in Hollywood

The seven films on resistance in Nazi Germany and Czechoslovakia released between 1939 and 1945 are a unique reflection of the ideas that American and European filmmakers in Hollywood had about Nazi Germany and what they wanted to show to the American public about the European war theatre, Nazism and the resistance against it. Seven films are

summarized briefly to provide context for the more detailed analysis of the major themes of the resistance movies in the following subsection. The movies will be presented in the chronological order of their release in two groups: movies produced before and after the United States had joined the Second World War.

3.1.1 *Movies Produced before 1942: Hitler—Beast of Berlin (1939), Mortal Storm (1940), and Underground (1941)*

The low budget film *Hitler—Beast of Berlin (1939)* was the first American movie on World War II to take place in Germany entirely. Produced by Producers Releasing Corporation, it was directed by Sam Newfield under the name Sherman Scott. The movie was an adaptation of an obscure novel called *Goose Step* by the American writer Shepard Traube. Fred Myton wrote the screenplay.⁶⁶ Though its title implies a salacious movie full of sensationalism, the film arguably handles the very new genre of World War II propaganda with realism. *Hitler—Beast of Berlin* is more direct in its stand against Nazism than the groundbreaking earlier film from the same year *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, because it directly addresses not only Nazism in Germany but the persecution of political opponents by the Nazis. The film regularly refers also to concentration camps.

Set before the outbreak of World War II, *Hitler—Beast of Berlin's* plot is about young Germans and their resistance against the Nazi regime. The two main characters, Hans Memling and Karl Bach, produce and distribute underground



Figure 14

⁶⁶ "Hitler - Beast of Berlin (1939) Full Cast," IMDb, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0031427/fullcredits?ref_=tt_q1_1 (accessed 9 December 2019).

anti-Nazi pamphlets. Memling is the leader of the leftist resistance group, while Bach is at first a more reluctant follower, who becomes increasingly more dedicated. When Hans is caught by the Gestapo and is accused of being a Communist, he insists that he is a liberal democrat, even when the Gestapo tortures him. One of the men who flogged Memling is a double agent of the resistance within the Gestapo. When drunk, he unintentionally reveals the names of the other members of the resistance. The double agent is shot and killed by the Gestapo. Karl and the rest of the members in the resistance group, all men, are put in a concentration camp with other political prisoners and “non-Aryans.” This term is the coded word for “Jewish.” No one ever says the word Jewish in the film. The resistance men have to do hard labor in the camps. While trying to escape, Bach is shot and killed, but Memling succeeds. He, his wife, Elsa, and their newborn baby escape Nazi Germany and migrate to the United States. Elsa Memling rejoices that they are free, but her spouse responds, “We can never be free as long as Hitler rules Germany.” In the United States they will continue their resistance against Nazi Germany by informing the world about the evils of Hitler.

Hitler—Beast of Berlin was the first film on the European war theater with only German protagonists. It established the “Good German” character trope in American war propaganda. This recurring trope is relevant because it shows that Hollywood's anti-Nazi movies made a distinction between Nazis and Germans. Every Nazi was a German, but not every German was a Nazi in American propaganda. No such distinction was made between good and evil Japanese characters in films about the Pacific theatre. The nuance given to and the empathy shown German characters in American propaganda is surprising, because often propaganda's goal is to motivate the public to fight by dehumanizing the enemy. *Hitler—Beast of Berlin* like subsequent resistance movies do not portray all Germans as villains, while showing the

persecution of and resistance by “good Germans.” The varied treatment of German characters in American propaganda from World War II speaks to the will of filmmakers to not alienate the large group of German-Americans in the United States, but also to mobilize Americans for the support of these persecuted good Germans by joining the fight of the allies.

MGM’s first anti-Nazi picture was *The Mortal Storm* (1940), directed by Frank Borzage. The script, was written by a team of the British author Claudine West, the Austrian-Jewish novelist and screenwriter George Froeschler, who had to leave Germany and migrated in the United States in 1936, and the leftist German screenwriter Hans Rameau, who had escaped Nazi Germany in 1933. It is based on a 1937 novel with the same title by Phyllis Bottome. The movie shows the impact of the rise of the Nazi Party in 1933 upon people in a Southern German town in general and the educated upper-class German-Jewish Roths family in particular. It can be assumed that Froeschler and Rameau also based the script partly on their own experiences in Nazi Germany

The central figures in the movie are Freya Roth, a young German-Jewish girl engaged to a young student of her father, Victor Roth a distinguished professor of medicine. Her fiancé Fritz Marberg joins the Nazi party after its rise to power in 1933. This brings him in increasing conflicts with Freya Roth, because her father is Jewish, but her mother and her two older sons from a previous marriage are Aryan. Victor and Anneliese Roth’s biological two younger children, Freya and her younger brother, are according to the Nazi’s racist ideology Jewish. When Freya Roth realizes the increasing persecution of her father and her family by the Nazis, in which her fiancé participates, she breaks the engagement and becomes closer to an old friend of the family and former student of her father, Martin Breitner, who is openly against the Nazi movement. After her father is imprisoned by the Nazis, because he is Jewish and unwilling to



Figure 15

support their racist ideology in his science classes, he encourages his wife to leave Germany with his daughter and the youngest son. Breitner pledges to help them, but only Freya Roth is willing to leave her home country with Breitner. When they attempt to cross the border illegally to flee to Switzerland through the mountains, a Nazi squad reluctantly led by her former fiancé Marberg chases them and shoots and wounds Freya Roth fatally. She dies in Breitner's arms just after they have crossed the border. The movie is notable because it warned openly against the anti-Semitism of the Nazis and their persecution of Jews.⁶⁷

The Warner Brother's film *Underground* (1940) (for the poster see **figure 8**) is another story of German resistance within the Third Reich, but this time during war. It was directed by American filmmaker Vincent Sherman and written by the American screenwriters Edwin Justus Mayer, Olivier H. P. Garrett, and Charles Grayson. *Underground* is the story of two brothers within wartime Nazi Germany. The elder brother, Eric Franken, is a resistance leader who illegally broadcasts an underground radio program. The younger brother, Kurt Franken, is a dedicated Nazi who has returned from combat after losing an arm. He is instructed by Colonel Heller, a vicious Nazi officer, to spy on Sylvia Helmuth, the woman he is infatuated with. When Kurt discovers that she is indeed in the resistance movement, he does not report her to the Gestapo, because he loves her. But he reports what he knows about the rest of her group, to which his brother also belongs. By doing this Kurt Franken inadvertently causes the arrest of his brother by the Gestapo. When he realizes that his betrayal has caused the death of his brother, he turns against the Nazis and joins the resistance movement. Kurt Franken takes the place of his brother as the “voice of the illegal radio” and makes sure that Eric hears him during the execution: Kurt’s voice is illegally projected over the prison courtyard. *Underground* is a tragic story with a heartbreaking ending that shows courageous young Germans who fight against the political oppression in Nazi Germany and are willing to sacrifice

⁶⁷ “The Mortal Storm” (1940), *IMDb*, at <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0032811/> (accessed: 16 January 2020).

their lives for the struggle for freedom. In this way, they are inspiring role models for all good and democratic Americans.⁶⁸

3.1.2 *Movies Produced 1942 to 1945: Berlin Correspondent (1942), Hitler's Madman (1943), Hangmen Also Die! (1943) and The Seventh Cross (1944)*

The movie *Berlin Correspondent* (1942), distributed by 20th Century Fox and directed by the American director Eugene Ford is a typical example for a commercial production that aimed for a broad audience made in the period after the United States had joined the Second World War. It is an instance of a “fish out of water movie,” where an American is foreigner placed in an extreme scenario. *Berlin Correspondent* had minimal if any influence from émigré filmmakers. With its American protagonist and American-led production, *Berlin Correspondent* is, perhaps predictably, the least accurate portrayal of resistance in Nazi Germany. Other films like *Hitler—Beast of Berlin* or *The Mortal Storm* are much more accurate in their depiction because émigrés who had fled Nazism were involved in their creation.

The main character of *Berlin Correspondent* is the American radio correspondent Bill Roberts reporting from Berlin in the center of Nazi Germany. His principal source of information is an elderly philatelist, a stamp expert. Roberts’s radio reports prove so damaging for the Nazi regime that the responsible Gestapo leader Captain von Rau sends his fiancée, Karen Hauen, to investigate Roberts. When the Gestapo discovers the philatelist as Robert’s source and sends him off



Figure 16

⁶⁸ “Underground” (1941), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0034337/?ref_=nv_sr_srg_0 (accessed: 16 January 2020).

to a concentration camp for treason, Karen Hauen realizes that the source of Robert's information was actually her own father. She changes sides and supports Robert and his work. Both are falling in love with each other. In the climax of the movie, both are being pursued by the Gestapo as they try to flee Germany. They take over on a small cargo plane by holding a young Nazi pilot captive at gunpoint and commanding him to fly them out of Germany. During turbulence, the gun falls to the ground and the pilot picks it

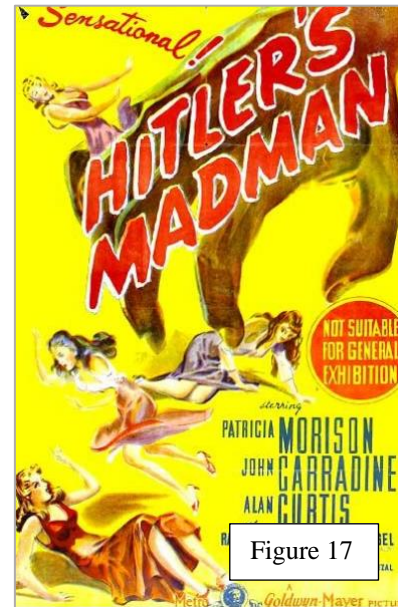


Figure 17

up. Everything looks bleak. The young German man has all the power. The pilot quickly gives the gun back to Bill after telling him that he dropped his pistol. A shocked Bill says, “You mean you want to get out of Germany?” The young German pilot replies, “Confidentially, it will be a pleasure.” The characters smile, the music swells, and the film ends. This relatively light movie with a lot of comedy and romance focuses more on the brave American, while the German resistance is a background element of the story. Even so, the story does portray “good Germans” and shows the danger of political persecution by the Nazi regime.⁶⁹

Hitler's Madman (1943) and *Hangmen Also Die!* (1943) were both films about resistance against Nazism in Prague and elsewhere in Czechoslovakia, and the assassination of SS Leader Reinhard Heydrich, the Acting Reich-Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. *Hangmen Also Die!* possessed a strong Anti-Nazi message that was praised by critics.⁷⁰ While *Hitler's Madman*, though less popular, was a more accurate depiction of recent historical events.

⁶⁹ “Berlin Correspondent” (1942), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0034507/?ref_=nv_sr_srsrg_0 (accessed: 16 January 2020).

⁷⁰ “Hangmen Also Die!,” *Variety*, December, 31 1942; “‘Hangmen Also Die,’ Is Super-Whodunit, Capitol: Story of Czech Courage, Based on Murder Of Heydrich, the ‘Hangman,’ Has Ace Cast,” *The Washington Post*, May 7, 1943.

Hitler's Madman was produced by Producers Releasing Company and Angelus Pictures and directed by the German director Douglas Sir, who had to emigrate to the United States in 1937 because of his Jewish wife. The movie's opening credits say that the 1942 poem "Murder of Lidice" by the American writer and poet Edna St. Vincent Millay's was the inspiration for the movie. Indeed, parts of the poem were read at the beginning of the film to introduce the audience to the doomed village. When the movie was completed, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer bought the production. The film tells the story of the destruction of the Czech Lidice by the Nazis in revenge for the killing of Heydrich. *Madman* is a tragic drama that includes forced prostitution, murder, and widespread oppression of the people in occupied Czechoslovakia. The story begins with a Czech resistance paratrooper, Karel Vavra, returning home and finding out that his parents have been sent to a concentration camp. Vavra is in love with fellow Czech resistance sympathizer Jarmila Hanka. Vavra is supposed to plan and organize a roadside attack by Czech and Slovak resistance fighters on Heydrich. Vavra and Hanka along with others carry out the assassination attempt on Heydrich, and afterwards flee the scene, but Hanka is killed by the Nazis. Unable to survive his wounds, Heydrich is also dying. His last order to the Gestapo is to kill all Czechs in the village from which his assassins came. The men are lined up and shot as they sing together in protest, the women are sent to concentration camps, and the village including its church is destroyed by fire and shelling. The final scene of the film is of the killed men as shadows in front of their burning town calling out to the free peoples of the world. They say that they were once free and happy until the Nazis came, and on the 10th of June 1942 murdered the people of Lidice. They ask to "catch him," meaning Hitler, before the same thing happens to you. *Hitler's Madman* ends without a silver lining, but instead with a stern warning.⁷¹

⁷¹ "Hitler's Madman" (1943), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0036005/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0 (accessed: 10 January 2020).

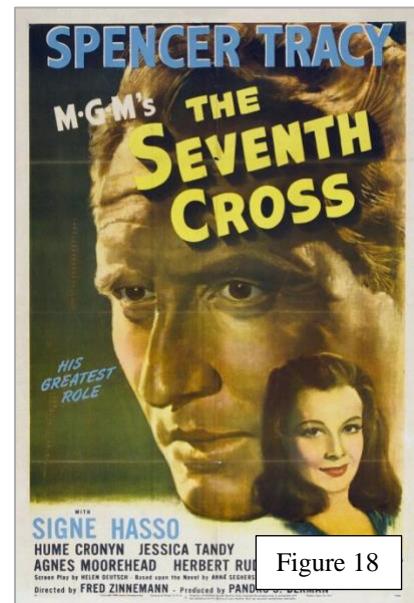
Fritz Lang's *Hangmen Also Die!* is a prime example of art as propaganda. After 1942, studios no longer had any reason to hold back when portraying Nazi atrocities and *Hangmen Also Die!* is evidence of the ease with which filmmakers could now produce films based on real events. The movie was distributed by United Artist and the screenplay was written by Bertold Brecht and John Wexley; accuracy was not the intent of these films. In this plot, the assassin of Heydrich is the Czech patriot and surgeon Dr. František Svoboda assassinates Heydrich, but his getaway car is discovered and with it Svoboda's identity. Therefore, his planned safe house needs to reject him. A young Czech woman, Mascha Novotny, deliberately misdirects German soldiers close to finding Svoboda. He meanwhile seeks her home as an alternative safe house. There Svoboda discovers that her father is the well-known history professor Stephen Novotny, whom the Nazis have banned from teaching. Because the Nazis cannot find Svoboda, the SS leaders in Prague decide to create an incentive for him to turn himself in or for others to do so. They arrest 400 citizens, including Professor Novotny, to be executed, forty at a time, until the assassin is named. Through a complex series of events, however, the resistance manages to frame a Czech traitor, but not before the Nazis have executed many of the hostages.⁷² *Hitler's Madman* and *Hangmen Also Die!* and movies like it are meant to elicit an emotional response to the Third Reich, its imperialist war, and its racist ideology. They are calls to action. The message of these films is that mass resistance is paramount for survival, and that decency and humanity are needed in the face of the pure evil represented by Nazism.

The MGM production *The Seventh Cross* (1944), directed by the Austria-born American film director Fred Zimmerman and written by the American screenwriter Helen Deutsch, is another story of the Nazi persecution of "good Germans" who oppose the terror

⁷² "Hangmen Also Die!" (1943), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035966/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1 (accessed: 10 January 2020).

regime of the Third Reich. It was adapted from the 1939 novel with the same title by the communist German novelist Anna Seghers, who fled Nazi Germany in 1934 and migrated, via France, to Mexico.⁷³ In Seghers' novel, the protagonist, George Heisler, is a communist, although, in the film, he is more vaguely portrayed as a socialist. This is nevertheless remarkable, because after 1945, in the political climate of potential Cold War, movies about World War II would not portray any leftists in a positive light. But during the war, filmmakers still were willing and able to recognize the fact, that many of the most active members in the resistance movement in Germany and Europe were social democrats, socialists, and communists. Moreover, without the Soviet Union the United States would not have been able to win the war.

In its center, *The Seventh Cross* is the story of the flight of seven prisoners from the fictional Westhofen concentration camp in 1936. The camp is portrayed as crowded with a diverse group of all-male inmates: political prisoners, criminals, and Jews. Though Nazi brutality rules the concentration camp, the prisoners depicted in the film do not resemble the starving, sick and dying concentration camp inmates made famous by photographs after the war. After the flight of the seven men, the camp commandant erects seven crosses and vows to "put a man on each." The movie follows the main character, George Heisler, during his escape across the countryside, taking refuge with those few who are willing to risk a visit from the Gestapo and imprisonment. It shows how one after the other the seven prisoners, with the exception of Heisler, are captured by the Gestapo. Only Heisler survives through a combination of luck, the kindness of strangers, and the help of friends. *The*



⁷³ Anna Seghers, *The Seventh Cross*. Translated by James A. Galston (Boston: Little, Brown, 1942).

Seventh Cross ends with George regaining his faith in humanity and escaping to what he identifies as “probably Holland.”⁷⁴ Again, this resistance movie ends with a positive and hopeful note and gives the American audience the feeling that there are still some good men and women left in Germany.

3.2 Major Themes of Resistance Movies

The following analysis will explore in more detail three questions: First, how did Hollywood portray Nazi Germany and Nazism? Second, how did it depict the resistance? And third, what role did class, race and gender play in the representation of Nazis and their opponents? Two of the most striking observations of resistance movies are that the Germans were portrayed with nuance and that political persecution in Nazi Germany played a more important role in propaganda films than racial persecution. Often the racial persecution of Jews was unmentioned or considered only as part of the persecution of several groups in Nazi Germany, especially political opponents. These dissidents included a broad spectrum from the far left, including communist and social democratic workers, who were indeed the first in the organized resistance against the Nazis inside Germany after 1933, to the moderate center, including liberal intellectuals, and Protestant and Catholic church members.⁷⁵ Resistance members were generally portrayed as selfless people, most notably men, with strong morals. Predictably, the Nazis were all brutal, rude and militaristic. However, though the vast majority of Nazi men were irredeemable villains, Hollywood created space for redemption in Nazi women and young Nazi men. American propaganda’s inclusion of positive German protagonists and even converted and redeemed Nazi characters was a surprising discovery that

⁷⁴ “The Seventh Cross” (1944), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0037263/?ref_=nv_sr_srsq_0 (accessed: 20 January 2020).

⁷⁵ For overviews of German resistance see, Clay, *Contending with Hitler*; and McDonough, *Opposition and Resistance*.

dispelled the idea that Hollywood propaganda from World War II were simplistic stories of good versus evil.

3.2.1 *Images of Nazis and Nazism*



Hollywood's depiction of Nazism was consistent throughout the war. The image of Nazism, its appearance and characteristics, in films was already defined with the first productions. Pristine Nazi uniforms can be seen already in the 1939 movie *Hitler--Beast of Berlin* as the film begins with uniform-clad men marching through the streets with red flags covered in swastikas (see the theatrical still in **Figure 19**). Men, women, and little children perform the Hitler salute. The scenes are so familiar from later documentaries on Nazi Germany that it makes modern viewers wonder if the film is using any documentary footage. But in terms of appearance, Hollywood did not have to investigate what Nazis in Nazi Germany was like visually. With the existence of Nazi propaganda films like Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935), the propaganda of the Nazi regime, there was ample visual material filmmakers could use as a blueprint for their movies.⁷⁶ The general portrayal of the Nazis did not change much from the early movies such as *Hitler—Beast of Berlin* to the last like *The Seventh Cross*.

But the filmmakers are clearly puzzled by three questions; “Who are the Nazis?”, “What is there social



⁷⁶ For an overview of Nazi propaganda see, Steven Luckert and Susan Bachrach, *State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda* (Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; New York, W.W. Norton, 2009).

background?” and “What motivates them?” All resistance movies implicitly ask and answer each of these questions. Some films like *Hitler’s Madman* or *The Seventh Cross* portray Nazis as sadistic thugs. *Hitler’s Madmen*, especially shows Nazis being cruel towards women and children. All of the films show Nazis as strict, hard and militaristic. *Hitler—Beast of Berlin* and *Hangmen Also Die!*, in particular, portray Nazis as merciless men with zero tolerance for any opposition, protest, and resistance, who are enjoying torturing their enemies without any mercy (see the theatrical still of *Hitler—Beast of Berlin* in **Figure 20**). Nazis in all seven of these films are usually quick to violence and brutal in its exercise. For example, in *The Mortal Storm*, a group of young Nazis, held together by their shared ideology, a lot of beer and comradeship, beat an older man publicly in a beer hall for not reciprocating the Hitler salute. With this action, they terrorize all others present in the beer hall and demonstrate their power. In response, a young boy in the film says to his father, “the individual must be sacrificed for the welfare of the state.” Nazis in the movies are conformists, anti-intellectual, anti-religious, and anti-Semitic.

The motivations of Nazis in Germany in Hollywood movies generally fell into two categories: power-seeking evil for evil’s sake or young men with naively misplaced nationalist zeal. The former was a more common motivation for Nazi characters. Unless they were women or very naïve young men, Nazis were ruthless evil monsters. This character trope could be called the “un-nuanced Nazi.” Examples are the Reinhard Heydrich character in *Hitler’s Madman* and *Hangmen Also Die!* or the steely-eyed Nazi villains in *Underground* and *Berlin Correspondent*. Heydrich’s character was a portrayal of a real Nazi leader who was infamous for his brutality. The “un-nuanced Nazis” are diabolical villains who crush all people standing in their way or who reject their vision of a “greater Germany” led by the “Führer.”

The other motivation given to Nazis by Hollywood was blinding hope for a “better Germany.” This motivation was only given to young Nazis like Kurt Franken, one of the two

main characters in *Underground*, or the two Aryan brothers of Freya Roth in *The Mortal Storm*. This motive for Nazi fealty allowed for filmmakers to create a path for redemption in Nazi characters. This “naïve Nazi” was a character seen more rarely in American war films than the “un-nuanced Nazi,” but it demonstrates that Hollywood filmmakers were willing to give even Nazi characters some sympathetic qualities. The “naïve Nazi” trope opened a space for future relations with a defeated Germany. At least women and young Nazis could be re-educated after the war.

Actors who played “un-nuanced” Nazis were used, again and again, creating a very identifiable Nazi character as a ruthless, calculated evil villain. Hollywood directors often used European, preferably Germany actors, who spoke English with a German accent and looked “German.” The paradox was that many of them were fervent anti-Nazis, who fled Nazi Germany and Europe. The British magazine *The Tatler and Bystander* published an article in September of 1941 about the film *Underground* titled “‘Underground’ Refugee Actors in a Dramatic Film of the Anti-Nazi Movement in Germany.”⁷⁷ This piece highlighted the intriguing fact that many Nazi characters in Hollywood propaganda films during World War II were émigré actors who had fled Nazism. One example is Conrad Veidt, a celebrated German actor of the Weimar Republic, who had to leave his home country because of his fervent opposition to the Nazis and his marriage with the Jewish actress Ilona Prager. The couple migrated to Britain in 1933.⁷⁸ Veidt used his craft to demonize Nazis and express his political opposition against the regime in this way in his acting. He played, for example, Major Heinrich Strasser in *Casablanca* (1942), a film that was written and began pre-production before the United States entered World War II. It was directed by the Hungarian-born American film

⁷⁷ “‘Underground’: Refugee Actors in a Dramatic Film of Anti-Nazi Movement in Germany,” *The Tatler and Bystander*, September 10, 1941, 365.

⁷⁸ Jerry C. Allen, *Conrad Veidt: from Caligari to Casablanca*, Pacific Grove, CA: Boxwood Press, 1987, 11,

director Michael Curtiz and produced by and distributed by Warner Brothers.⁷⁹

Another example is the German actor Martin Kosleck (born Nicolaie Yoshkin), who fled Germany when the Nazis came to power. Having publicly opposed the regime. He was placed on the Gestapo list of “undesirables” in 1933. After he migrated via Britain to the United States, he became one of Hollywood’s most recognizable Nazis on-screen. Kosleck was a deep-felt opponent of Nazism, which inspired his villainous Nazi characters. He played Nazis throughout his career, including in *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, *Foreign Correspondent*, *Underground*, *Berlin Correspondent*, *The North Star*, and *The Hitler Gang*. In total, he portrayed Nazi characters in seven of the forty-four films in the datafile alone. In five films he played Joseph Goebbels. Kosleck’s frequent appearances as a Nazi in Hollywood movies is a testament to a unique form of personal resistance.⁸⁰

3.2.2 *Depictions of Resistance*

Hollywood depictions of resistance within Germany generally show patriotic people who love Germany and work tirelessly to combat Nazism. Small but steadfast groups whose motivations were selfless wants for freedom and a better Germany. In *Hitler—Beast of Berlin*, and *Underground*, the resistance groups were made up of men and women, but women were only present as subaltern members of the resistance movement and as supporting lovers and wives of men in the resistance. This representation of female characters maintains that resistance is a “man’s task,” as shown in *Hitler’s Madman*. Hollywood’s filmmakers mainly included female characters because they needed them for romance, which supposedly was

⁷⁹ “Casablanca” (1942), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0034583/?ref=mv_sr_srsrg_0 (accessed: 12 January 2020).

⁸⁰ “Martin Kosleck; Actor 89,” *The New York Times*, 1994.

essential to attract an American and female audience.

The American audience is also the reason why films like *Hitler—Beast of Berlin*, use religion, more precisely the freedom of religion, as one motivation for the fight against the Nazis. In reality, religious motives did not inspire the majority of the resistance in Germany and Nazi occupied Europe, especially not the early resistance against the Third Reich in Germany. The majority of Germans in the Catholic and Protestant churches collaborated with the Nazi regime. The earliest and most active resistance came from the labor movement.⁸¹ Comparatively, few movies depicted the collaboration between the churches and the Nazi regime. One example is *Hitler's Madman*. In this realistic movie based on real events, religion is used by collaborators and the opponents of the resistance as motivation not to fight against the Nazis, to remain passive, or even fraternize. Religion is one of the few inconsistencies in the depiction of resistance groups. Overall, these films portray resistance groups as multigenerational political groups of virtuous men and women selflessly united against a common enemy.

According to American movies, methods of resistance within Germany were as varied as they were dangerous. In *Hitler—Beast of Berlin*, the resistance group produces illegal pamphlets to mobilize public opinion, as indeed several groups tried the Third Reich.⁸² For example, one leaflet in the movie read, “To All Peace Loving Germans—The entire world is horrified by the brutalities that have been visited upon our once civilized nation. This constant betrayal of the people can lead to but one end—complete annihilation of the German nation.” The films, in general, emphasize the importance of spreading information about the true agenda of Nazism in Germany and the European territories. In *The Mortal Storm*, the primary form of

⁸¹ See resistance in Nazi Germany, see Geyer and Boyer, eds. *Resistance against the Third Reich*; for more detail on partisan resistance see, Juliette Pattinson and Ben Shepherd, eds., *War in a Twilight World: Partisan and Anti-Partisan Warfare in Eastern Europe, 1939-45* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁸² See for resistance in Germany, Wayne Geerling and Gary Magee, *Quantifying Resistance: Political Crime and the People's Court in Nazi Germany* (Singapore: Springer, 2017)

resistance is helping the persecuted to get out of Nazi Germany. Similarly, in *The Seventh Cross*'s plot, resistance is mainly solidarity in the struggle to survive and helping persecuted Germans to get out of the Third Reich. In *Berlin Correspondent* and *Underground*, the spread of alternative information over the radio and the listening to foreign radio programs is the focal form of resistance. The latter indeed, was quite common and very dangerous too.⁸³ And of course, espionage and double agents were prominent forms of resistance portrayed in the movies.

The representation of acts of terrorism, like the assassination of Heydrich, in *Hitler's Madman* or *Hangmen Also Die!* were the exception on the screen and only possible outside of the Third Reich. In the occupied territories, like Czechoslovakia, the members of the resistance groups are also less isolated in the population because it was collectively suppressed and exploited by the Nazis. In *Hangmen Also Die!* a bar sign that reads, "No Czechs and dogs," highlights the subjugation. In *Hitler's Madman*, the sexual exploitation of women is the culmination of cruel oppression. In one scene, girls and young women are lined up in front of the Nazis to be judged and sent to the Russian front to "entertain" German soldiers. This scene alludes to the forced prostitution of women in the brothels of the German Wehrmacht, for which women were simply snared on the streets of the occupied territories.⁸⁴ One of the lined-up women kills herself rather than be examined by a Nazi doctor. Both movies show resistance in occupied Europe as risky acts of desperation that include terror acts, sabotaging military arms production, hiding members of the resistance and non-collaboration. Even ordinary citizens, male and female, have the courage to withhold information and do not betray their

⁸³ See for types of resistance in Nazi Germany, John J. Michalczyk, *Confront!: Resistance in Nazi Germany* (New York: P. Lang, 2004).

⁸⁴ See for forced prostitution and sexual violence in Nazi Germany, Katarzyna Person, "Sexual Violence during the Holocaust—The Case of Forced Prostitution in the Warsaw Ghetto." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 33, no. 2 (2015): 103-21; and Annette F. Timm, "Sex with a Purpose: prostitution, Venereal Disease and Militarized Masculinity in the Third Reich." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11, no. 1-2 (2002): 223-55.

fellow countrymen and women, despite the threat of torture or death. Resistance against the Nazis' occupation is depicted by Hollywood to be the only logical answer to the suffering and violence unleashed by the Nazis.

3.2.3 *Representations of Class, Race and Gender*

According to Hollywood movies, Nazism was strictly masculine, and German women are not genuine Nazis. The group of analyzed films presents Aryan women mainly as bystanders and victims of the Third Reich. Aside from the occasional rigid Nazi secretary that Argentine actress Mona Maris played in both *Underground* and *Berlin Correspondent*, women in the American productions are not Nazis. Even Maris' female Nazi characters are more motivated by their love of Nazi men than by Nazism itself. In *The Seventh Cross*, women are either scared collaborators of the Nazi regime, who are forced by fear into subordination, or resistance-minded characters. In *The Mortal Storm*, none of the women are Nazis; they all voice dissent to the young Nazi men around them. Women are mothers of Nazis, fiancés of Nazis, and resistance fighters against Nazism. When the lead female character in *The Mortal Storm*, Freya Roth, ends her relationship with her Nazi fiancée, Fritz Marberg, because of his new Nazi convictions, he tells her, "Women don't know anything about politics...you needn't bother your head about them." But Freya does care and thus detests the Nazi brute.

In addition to the role of wife, mother, or resistance member who is often a love interest of a male character, women were potential victims of sexual violence in Hollywood movies

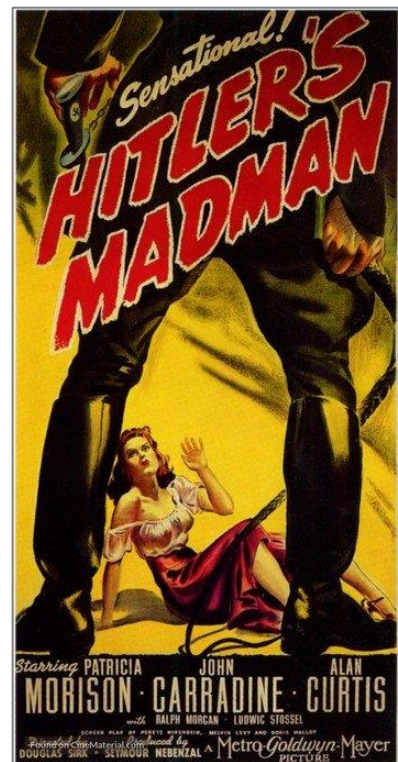


Figure 21

about Nazism. One example is the movie *Hitler's Madman*, as already discussed above. This is also indicated by the movie poster (see **Figure 21**), on which a large SS man, only visible from the back, with his black leather boots, uniform and a whip, is threatening a beautiful, young woman. *Hitler's Madman* is a particularly salacious film that revels in the sadistic and hypersexual abusive treatment of women by the Nazis. All the promotional material for the film, i.e., posters, photos, etc. are depictions of Nazi men being violent towards women or looming over women with a strong implication of violence. Granted, such imagery is not out of the norm for 1940s movie advertising, in which the depiction of violence against women was quite popular on contemporary movie posters. However, in light of the main plot of *Hitler's Madman*, this focus of the PR is astonishing. The central theme of the movie was the assassination of Heydrich and the persecution of the Czech resistance. One wonders if the distribution company Loew's Inc. was worried that such a sober subject and realistic movie would not sell and wanted to “spice up” the film in its PR.

Class distinctions in American propaganda films set in Nazi Germany and occupied Europe are not a prominent subject. They are mostly indicated by the level of education and cultural sophistication. Class related commentaries are thus more implicit. The message of the movies was that being an educated and liberal white man, an intellectual, in Nazi Germany was dangerous. In *The Mortal Storm*, Prof. Viktor Roth is of Jewish heritage, but he seems to have converted to Christianity. Only the racist and anti-Semitic ideology of the Nazis labels him as a “Jew.” What really places him in danger in 1933 is that he refuses to teach Nazi ideology. For him, there is simply no difference between “Aryan” and “non-Aryan” blood. This refusal, along with his implied Jewish heritage, leads to his arrest, his placement in a concentration camp, and in the end, his murder. The majority of his academic colleagues and former students changed their opinion very quickly, after the Nazis came into power. German universities

indeed did become early centers of ardent Nazism, as was suggested in the movie *The Mortal Storm*.⁸⁵

Jewish representation in Hollywood movies about resistance in Europe is surprisingly sparse. As previously discussed, early films like *Hitler—Beast of Berlin* and *The Mortal Storm* substituted the word “non-Aryan” for “Jewish.” Even Jewish-run studios like Warner Brothers did not make films during the Second World War, focusing on the persecution of Jews. The Warner Brother’s film *Underground* presents the fight against Nazism as a fight for personal freedoms. Interestingly, and arguably because of anti-Semitism in the United States, Hollywood chose to present Nazism as a threat to democracy and all free peoples rather than single out the mass persecution of the Jews and the Holocaust. Only after 1942, did the persecution of Jews become more explicit in American movies. In *Hitler’s Madman*, the Gestapo decides to blame Heydrich’s assassination on a Jew, because they think that the press will not consider Czech resistance a believable culprit. Films from later in the war generally include the word Jewish, have minor Jewish characters, and present Jews among the victims of Nazi Germany.

The Holocaust depicted in Hollywood films during the war little resembled the genocide of Jew by Nazi Germany or the Holocaust, as depicted in more recent films. Gestapo prisons and palliated concentration camps became the symbols of Nazi persecution in American films during the Second World War, but the scope of Jewish persecution and the Holocaust was largely unaddressed. The focus during the whole conflict was on the persecution of political opponents. In films as early as *Hitler—Beast of Berlin*, characters discuss the threat of being put in a concentration camp. One resistance member says, “Concentration camps are full of people like us,” implying that concentration camps are mainly used for political

⁸⁵ For detail on universities in Nazi Germany see, Robert P. Ericksen, *Complicity in the Holocaust: Churches and Universities in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

opponents of the Nazi regime, which was indeed the case, before Jews from Germany, and all occupied European countries were sent by the millions to ghettos and concentration camps starting in 1941. The adequately depicted Jewish persecution during the Second World War reflected, on the one hand, the general unwillingness of the international public to believe the information about the Holocaust and recognize its dimensions, and on the other hand, the extent of anti-Semitism far beyond Nazi Germany.⁸⁶ Only in a later film, like *The Seventh Cross*, which was released in 1944, are Jews portrayed among prisoners, though they are depicted as merely one of the many persecuted groups. The mass genocide against Jews was not the subject of Hollywood films produced before 1945. Instead, during World War II, American filmmakers chose the more hopeful perspective of resistance to inspire the American public to support the struggle against Nazi Germany.

3.3 The Perception of Resistance Movies in Contemporary Film Reviews

The straightforward message of the film *Hitler—Beast of Berlin*, that resistance is the ultimate duty in the face of the evil of Nazism was controversial in 1939. The filmmakers initially intended to call the film “Beast of Berlin.” However, to keep the United States at peace with Germany, the film was widely released under the title “Goose Step,” like the novel it was based on. Reviews of the movie from 1939 address this title controversy. (The title of the film was officially changed back to *Hitler—Beast of Berlin* in 1943.) The back and forth of the title of this film shows how the studio felt pressure before 1942 to conform to American neutrality. *Hitler—Beast of Berlin* received mixed reviews upon initial release. The polarized response to the film reflected the divided opinions that Americans had in 1939 about Hollywood making

⁸⁶ See overviews of indifference towards the Holocaust, Michael McClintock and Judith Sunderland, *Antisemitism in Europe: Challenging Official Indifference* (New York, N.Y.: Human Rights First, 2004); and the documentary *America and the Holocaust: Deceit and Indifference*, directed by Martin Ostrow, WGBH Boston, 2005.

political pictures about the war that had started in Europe, far away on the other side of the Atlantic. James G. Stahlman, political correspondent of the *Nashville Banner*, for example, fumed in his editorial piece “This Should Be Stopped” in September 1939, that the filmmakers exploited people’s emotions. He deemed *Hitler—Beast of Berlin* a sensational piece of propaganda. He criticized the film for putting the United States in danger by using serious matters to make easy money.⁸⁷ His negative opinion was challenged by positive reviews, such as “Goose Step” Tells of Nazi Horror,” published in the New York-based *Jewish Advocate* in December 1939. Notably, even this review in a Jewish newspaper did not address the missing word “Jewish” in the film. Instead, it praised the film for its frankness about Nazi Germany and the performances of the film’s cast.⁸⁸

The reception of *The Mortal Storm*, the first MGM anti-Nazi film released in 1940, was widely positive. Douglas W. Churchill, in his review in the *New York Times* in January 1940, described it as a “controversial and courageous” story of German life.⁸⁹ Bosley Crowther, titled his article in the *New York Times*, published in June 1940, “‘The Mortal Storm,’ a Deeply Tragic Anti-Nazi Film at the Capitol.” He recommended it as an excellent tragedy about a German family.⁹⁰ Some days later, Crowther continued the discussion of the film in a *New York Times* article titled “Lost Opportunity; Or Where was Hollywood when the Lights in Germany Went Out?.” He asked, why movies like *The Mortal Storm* were not produced earlier by Hollywood.⁹¹

⁸⁷ James G. Stahlman, “This Should be Stopped,” *The Nashville Banner*, September 13, 1939.

⁸⁸ “‘Goose Step’ Tells of Nazi Horror,” *The Jewish Advocate*, December 29, 1939.

⁸⁹ Douglas W. Churchill, “‘Mortal Storm,’ Controversial Story of German Life, goes before Metro Camera Next Week,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1940.

⁹⁰ Bosley Crowther, “‘The Mortal Storm,’ a Deeply Tragic Anti-Nazi Film at the Capitol,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1940.

⁹¹ Bosley Crowther, “Lost Opportunity; Or Where was Hollywood when the Lights in Germany Went Out?,” *New York Times*, June 23, 1940.

Underground was reviewed positively by film critics of the time, even as some labeled it “propaganda.” Philip K. Scheuer, in his review “Nazi Gestapo Kayoed in Hard-Hitting ‘Underground’,” praised it in the *Los Angeles Times* in June 1941 as a “triumphant anti-Nazi picture.”⁹² Cecil Smith, too recommended the movie in an article in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in August 1942. The title “‘Underground’ is Propaganda, but Has Engrossing Story” tells the tenor of his review.⁹³ Hollywood films produced during the Second World War with the aim of informing the American public about the situation in Nazi Germany and war-torn Europe were often called “propaganda” by film critics. Although not many anti-Nazi movies were released in 1940-41, an article in *Variety Movie Reviews* complained about the (too) many movies on this subject. The anonymous author wrote in his review of *Underground* in January 1941, the story is grim and hard-hitting, but not groundbreaking; this is “merely another violent attack on the barbarism of Nazism.”⁹⁴ But such movies seem to have found their audience.

Despite their differences in terms of historical accuracy, *Hitler’s Madman* and *Hangman Also Die!* were both commended by critics as effective movie portrayals of the Czech resistance that did not dilute the harrowing reality of Nazi occupation. Mae Tinee, in her September 1943 *Chicago Daily Tribune* review “Tale of Lidice Convince as Told on Screen,” praised *Hitler’s Madman* as a convincing drama based on recent events.⁹⁵ *Hangmen Also Die!*, though less based on fact than *Hitler’s Madman*, was considered a triumph by Cecil Smith. In his critique in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* titled “‘Hangmen also Die’ Glorifies Czechs’ Spirit,” he praised the production as a “moving patriotic film.”⁹⁶ The positive reception of both movies

92 Philip K. Scheuer, “Nazi Gestapo Kayoed in Hard-Hitting ‘Underground,’” *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1941.

93 Cecil Smith, “‘Underground’ Is Propaganda, but Has Engrossing Story,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 15, 1941.

94 “Underground,” *Variety Movie Reviews*, no.1, January 1, 1941, 88.

95 Mae Tinee, “Tale of Lidice Convince as Told on Screen,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 28, 1943.

96 Cecil Smith, “‘Hangmen also Die’ Glorifies Czechs’ Spirit,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July, 1943).

is a testament to how propaganda films during World War II could be perceived as genuinely moving stories about human resilience.

The reception of *The Seventh Cross* by film critics was more controversial. Differences were especially marked between British and American reviewers. The overarching message of *The Seventh Cross* that “good Germans” and human decency still existed in Nazi Germany, and that resistance members and their supporters in the population would risk their lives to fight Nazism was contentious. Particularly critical was the English journalist and BBC reporter Gilbert Harding in his review in the Toronto *Globe and Mail*. Titled “‘Seventh Cross’ Declared Nazi Propaganda,” and published in October 1944. Harding insisted that one should not separate Germans from Nazis, because “all Germans knew of the hideous deeds of the Nazi Party.” For him, *The Seventh Cross* was too forgiving towards Germans. He conceded that he did not think Hollywood intended to make a piece of German propaganda, but he criticized *The Seventh Cross* sharply for supporting the myth of “good Germans.” In his review, Harding furthermore stated that only Germans could have become Nazis and after the defeat will need a “conversion” to civilized ideas. He seems to have subscribed to the notion that Nazism arose from a flaw in the German character and therefore insisted on a much more critical portrayal of Germans in Hollywood movies.⁹⁷

In contrast to Harding, American critics praised *The Seventh Cross*, particularly for holding the German people accountable for the crimes of Nazi Germany. In September 1944 Bosley Crowther in his review “‘Seventh Cross,’ Anti-Nazi Drama, With Spencer Tracy, at Capitol—Other New Films,” in the *New York Times* and David Platt in his critique “A New Powerful Anti-Nazi Film,” in *The Daily Worker* praised *The Seventh Cross* for not letting the German people’s responsibility go unaddressed. Platt argued that the picture does “not gloss over the giant moral guilt of the German people,” and Crowther observed that the film did not

⁹⁷ “‘Seventh Cross’ Declared Nazi Propaganda,” *The Globe and Mail*, October 20, 1944.

overlook the “bestiality of Nazi brutes nor the miserable self-surrender of German citizens to their black regime.”⁹⁸ The public debate over resistance movies, like *The Seventh Cross*, released at the end of the Second World War, set the tone for the controversial post-war discussion between allies on how to treat defeated Germany and the Germans.

Different than most of Hollywood’s propaganda movies, produced between 1942 and 1945, the films on Nazi Germany and occupied Europe released during World War II were not only reviewed for their entertainment value and their cinematic prowess. They were treated by film critics with more seriousness, because they dealt with current events. Some propaganda films were commercial failures like *Hitler—Dead or Alive* and flopped with the film critics. Others became great successes at the box office and with the critics, such as *Mrs. Miniver* (1942) and *Casablanca* (1942). Both won in the Academy Awards an Oscar for “Outstanding Motion Picture”: *Mrs. Miniver* in the 15th (1943) and *Casablanca in the 16th (1944)* Academy Awards.⁹⁹ They demonstrated the breadth of Hollywood’s talent and ability.

In the American press, film critics and political journalists who wrote about the resistance movies were usually more informed politically and had higher aesthetic standards in their reviews of movie productions than the average audience. Critics’ perspectives is a window in the debate of American intellectuals and their expectations in respect of Hollywood’s response to World War II. Some applauded Hollywood for condemning injustice and telling controversial anti-Nazi stories in the early years of the Second World War. Others perceived these attempts as too little too late and criticized the reluctance of the majority of Hollywood’s filmmakers to produce more movies about the war in Europe and report more honestly about

⁹⁸ Bosley Crowther, “‘Seventh Cross,’ Anti-Nazi Drama, With Spencer Tracy, at Capitol—Other New Films,” *The New York Times*, September 29, 1944; David Platt, “A New Powerful Anti-Nazi Film,” *The Daily Worker*, September 30, 1944.

⁹⁹ “The 15th Academy Awards (1943) Nominees and Winners,” and “The 16th Academy Awards (1944) Nominees and Winners,” *Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences*, Oscars, at <https://www.oscars.org/oscars/ceremonies/1944> (accessed 2 December 2019).

the situation in Nazi Germany and the European territories it had occupied early on.¹⁰⁰ Movies released between 1942 and 1945, like *Berlin Correspondent*, were rarely considered groundbreaking movies and were overall seen as unremarkable parts of the large body of American propaganda.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to judge how American audiences perceived the movies. The only criteria is the box office success, and here nuanced movies with an interesting plot that were well made fared clearly better. The strategy of most American filmmakers to present not only evil Nazi villains and as their counterparts, shining resistance heroes, but include a wide variety of male and female, old and young characters in the script, with whom the audience could identify, seem to have been a smart decision. The movies presented “resistance members” with a sometimes “broken characters,” “good German,” who were not part of the resistance movement but supported persecuted, and even some mainly young and female Nazis, who became opponents of the regime, as a smart strategy to get the attention of the audience.

This complex image of the resistance, however, did not survive in American movies on the Second World War produced after 1945. In the first three two postwar decades Hollywood’s filmmaker very rarely took up the subjects of the resistance in Nazi Germany. In the context of the developing Cold War, leftist or liberal resistance heroes had no place in Hollywood movies. Hollywood would no longer produce films like *The Seventh Cross*. At best resistance inside the German Wehrmacht by individual generals and officers was an acceptable subject for movies, which also stood at the center of the postwar recollection of the resistance in West Germany.¹⁰¹ Mainly one image of “the German,” created in movies during the war, dominated after the war: the Nazi villain. This antagonist has endured in Hollywood movies,

¹⁰⁰ Philip K. Scheuer. “Nazi Gestapo Kayoed in Hard-Hitting ‘Underground,’” *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1941; and “A Damning Indictment of Hitler: ‘The Mortal Storm’ Persecution—Torture—Death,” *The Tatler and Bystander*, October 9, 1940, 158.

¹⁰¹ See Danny Orbach, “Criticism Reconsidered: The German Resistance to Hitler in Critical German Scholarship,” *The Journal of Military History* 75, no. 2 (2011): 565-590.

produced in the first three decades after the war. His character had been shaped by German actors during the war, who had migrated to the United States to escape the Nazi persecution, like the experiences of Conrad Veidt and Martin Kosleck. German and European émigrés in Hollywood, who had used their art to combat Nazism during the war, often had a hard time in the rising Cold War to find work in Hollywood.

The creative influence of leftist and liberal filmmakers diminished quickly too in postwar Hollywood. In the Cold War, with the rise of anticommunism and McCarthyism impacted everybody in Hollywood. Several filmmakers were accused of leftist subversion or treason without proper regard for evidence, investigated, blacklisted and interrogated by the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the most prominent and active government committee involved in anti-communist investigations. They lost their work opportunities and income. example is Bertolt Brecht, the screenwriter of *Hangmen Also Die!*, who had to leave German because of Nazi persecution in 1933. Brecht was blacklisted and subpoenaed to appear before the HUAC in September 1947, together with about 41 other Hollywood writers, directors, actors and producers. On October 30, 1947, Brecht testified that he had never been a member of the Communist Party. The was McCarthyism led to increased self-censorship Hollywood and made it almost impossible for liberal and leftist filmmakers like Brecht to find work there. One day after his testimony Brecht returned to Europe and settled down first in Zurich in Switzerland.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Paul Haacke, "The Brechtian Exception: From Weimar to the Cold War," *Diacritics* 40, no. 3 (2012): 56-85; Larry Dane Brimner, *Blacklisted!: Hollywood, the Cold War, and the First Amendment* (Boyd Mill: Calkins Creek, 2018); and Michael Freedland, *Hollywood on Trial: McCarthyism's War Against the Movies* (London: Robson Books, 2007).

Conclusion

Historian David E. Meerse's estimated that Hollywood made more than 400 feature films about the war between 1939 and 1945. The movies set within Nazi Germany and occupied Europe are a small, but very interesting group in this large body of American propaganda films. The 44 films set within the Third Reich and Nazi occupied Europe during the Second World War that I identified in my research reflect both: the evolution of the American involvement in Europe during the war and the development of the conflict in the European theatre. The movies produced in Hollywood between 1939 and 1945 responded directly to events of the time. The small number of early films, released between 1939 and 1942, on Nazi Germany and the European territories it occupied since 1939 were exceptional and controversial pictures whose filmmakers risked profit potential to make political statements about the war and against Nazism. Films released between 1942 and 1945, were part of Hollywood's mass-production of propaganda in collaboration with the US government and no longer sources of controversy.

The two major aims of Hollywood's propaganda were, on the one hand, to strengthen the American national identity by creating an image of the "other," the enemy states Germany, Italy and Japan and their people, and on the other hand to mobilize the American population for the struggle against these enemies. At first glance, it seems therefore reasonable to expect that Hollywood would not give nuance to the fictional representations of the enemies in its movies produced in the context of the Second World War. For movies that depicted the enemy Imperial Japan, this was the case during the war. Films on Nazi Germany, however, show much more variety in the depicted image of Germans.

The popular Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer movie *Mrs. Miniver*, which was produced in 1941 and released in June 1942, is a typical movie with only one German character, the evil Nazi

villain.¹⁰³ The movie is set in a middle-class London suburb Belham, where Kay Miniver, her spouse and her three children live a comfortable life in a house with a large garden until the beginning of World War II, which brought with it death and destruction of German aerial bombing. The Nazi character in the movie is a pilot, played by Austrian actor Helmut Dantine, who crashed his plane close to Belham. The vile nature of this pilot was a point of controversy between the film's director, the staunchly anti-Nazi William Wyler, and the studio head, Louis B. Mayer. During the early filming of *Mrs. Miniver* in 1941, Mayer saw footage of the German pilot character spouting his Nazi rhetoric in the uncut film. He was not happy with it and told Wyler, "you must remember one thing we are not making a hate-picture, we don't hate anybody, we were not in the war."¹⁰⁴ Mayer preferred to make pro-British movies rather than anti-German movies to avoid controversy. However, Wyler would not back down. He thought that if he was making a movie with only one German, it had to be a "typical Nazi son of a bitch. He's not going to be a friendly little pilot but one of Goering's monsters."¹⁰⁵ After the United States had declared war on Japan, and subsequently Germany declared war on the United States, Louis B. Mayer approved of the contemptible German pilot in *Mrs. Miniver*. Pearl Harbor, thus represented a turning point in the war, in Hollywood's orientation toward Nazism and in the production of *Mrs. Miniver*. The story of this movie exemplifies the challenges Hollywood directors faced before December 1941, when they wanted to express criticism of the Nazis in their movies.

Hollywood did, however, not depict all Germans as evil. This observation contradicts the common assumption that propaganda is simplistic and creates mainly black-and-white pictures.

¹⁰³ "Mrs. Miniver" (1942), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035093/?ref_=nv_sr_srgs_0 (accessed: 10 February 2020).

¹⁰⁴ Anthony Breznican, "Oscar Flashback: Mrs. Miniver won big 75 years ago — and its message of resistance endures," *Entertainment*, 4 March 2018, at <https://ew.com/oscars/2018/03/04/oscar-flashback-mrs-miniver-won-big-75-years-ago-and-its-message-of-resistance-endures/> (accessed 10 February 2020.)

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

The analysis of the 44 movies in my datafile focusing on Nazi Germany and Nazi occupied Europe that were released between 1919 and 1945 show that most of these movies were not simplistic “us versus them” propaganda films. Their portrayals of Germans were more nuanced than in *Mrs. Miniver* and contained a broad spectrum of German protagonists, including sympathetic German characters. The nuances in the depiction of German characters, the importance of the subject of resistance in the propaganda movies on Nazi Germany, along with the intense collaboration of émigré filmmakers and Hollywood in the production of movies against Nazi Germany, were the most surprising finding of this study.

The political situation at home and the development of the Second World War itself strongly impacted the extent and nature of Hollywood’s war propaganda between 1939 and 1945. German-speaking Europe was an important and lucrative market for Hollywood’s film production companies, and their owners were thus slow to react to the rise of Nazism. They feared that anti-Nazi movies would alienate the government of the Third Reich that increasingly controlled the German cinema market since 1933. After 1939, with the development of the war in the European theater, and Nazi Germany’s ban of American films in all areas under its control, which Italy followed, Hollywood’s portrayal of the conflict slowly changed. The most important step was the American entry into World War II in December 1941, when Hollywood started to produce together with the government’s Office of War Information (OWI) one propaganda movie after the other.

The movie makers usually responded very quickly to the current events, for example, the killing of SS leader Reinhard Heydrich, the Deputy Reich-Protector of occupied Bohemia and Moravia,¹⁰⁶ and also picked up the story of contemporary novels, like *The Seventh Cross* written by the German migrant Anna Seghers, that described the situation in Nazi Germany and occupied Europe as subjects for their films. What Hollywood filmmakers were aware of

¹⁰⁶ See MacDonald, *The Assassination*.

they would generally use as material. Their depiction of the resistance was astonishingly realistic. It portrayed a broad spectrum of resistance activities mainly by leftist and liberal groups and individuals from the illegal production of leaflets and newspapers, the illegal listening to foreign, mostly British radio news, over the illegal smuggling of persecuted people out of the country, espionage and sabotage to terror acts. One factor that surely contributed to the nuanced and realistic portrayal of the resistance in Hollywood movies was the presence of screen writers and film directors, who had been forced to leave the Third Reich and Nazi occupied Europe because of their racial or political persecution as communists or socialists by the Nazis and had migrated to the United States. Several of them tried to find work in Hollywood during World War II and support the struggle against Nazi Germany.

The movies on Nazi Germany and occupied Europe portrayed persecution by the Nazis, but the focus was more on political than on racial persecution. The Holocaust only marginally and slowly became a more visible subject in Hollywood films produced in the war years. Films from 1939 would only allude to or portray the racist persecution of Jews as one form of Nazi persecution next to political persecution. Because mass killings in concentration and death camps did not occur before 1941, the climax of these killings was not reached before 1943-44, and politicians and the public in the Allied countries were very slow to recognize the Holocaust, despite information and warnings that were smuggled out of Nazi German and occupied Europe, it is not surprising that this is also reflected in the movies. In addition, many Americans shared anti-Semitic prejudices at the time. It was not before 1944-45 that the news of the Holocaust became more publicly known.

In the last year of the Second World War, as soon as it became clear that Hitler's Wehrmacht would be defeated and the war would end, American filmmakers, encouraged by the US government, started to make movies that allowed the idea of a potential post-war reconciliation with Germany. But already before 1944-45. American movies tend to suggest,

at least implicitly, that Americans were at war with Nazism, not with the Germans. The “good Germans” in the resistance movies were portrayed as people whose general principles were similar to and compatible with those held by most Americans. This allowed identifications, although much of the resistance in the movies as in reality came de facto from a leftist background. Not only ordinary working-class people, but also peasants, the petite bourgeoisie, and the occasional aristocrat all allied in the movies in their opposition to Nazi tyranny, which was in reality not the case. Resistance groups fought often separated and isolated. Hollywood’s movies on the resistance depoliticized its activities to make it easier for American audiences to identify with resistance characters. This inclusion of both “evil” Nazis “good Germans” in Hollywood movies produced during the Second World War was not limited to the resistance movies. This mixed portrayal clearly reflected the fact that German-Americans were a large minority, and many of them still had relatives in Germany.

The main function of “resistance films” produced between 1939 and 1942 was to motivate more Americans to support the Allies abroad who fought the war against Nazi Germany, and between 1942 and 1945 to mobilize the soldiers and the civilian population for this struggle that now the Americans had joined too with a hopeful and positive message. Hollywood’s resistance films showed the evil Nazi enemy but also emphasized that there was hope because there were still “good people” in Nazi Germany and Europe that fought against the Nazis. These “good people” needed American support.

After Nazi Germany was defeated in May 1945, Hollywood needed to move on and prepare the postwar society for the new Cold War order. Subjects like the resistance against the Nazis by communist and socialist individuals and groups, and people like the leftist émigré filmmakers and actors no longer had a place in Hollywood. The émigré filmmakers returned to their home countries or assimilated to their new home culture. The theme of resistance in films on Nazi Germany during World War II lost its importance after World War II had ended.

American movies on this conflict focused now on the cultural production of national war memories. In the center of these memories stood the heroic American soldiers of the Second World War and their struggle in all war theaters: Africa, Asia, and Europe. In the last two decades, movies about World War II primarily fall into two categories: Holocaust films and combat films. Director Steven Spielberg's wildly successful films, *Schindler's List* (1993) and *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), are excellent examples of these two genres.¹⁰⁷ Films about resistance in Nazi Germany and occupied Europe are still rarely produced in Hollywood today. One exception is the 2008 movie *Defiance* directed by Edward Zwick set during the occupation of Belarus by Nazi Germany.¹⁰⁸ The screenplay is based on Nechama Tec's 1993 book *Defiance: The Bielski Partisans*, an account of the Bielski partisans, a group led by Polish Jewish brothers who saved and recruited 1,200 Jews in Belarus during the Second World War.¹⁰⁹ Most of the movies on the subject of resistance are nowadays produced in Europe. One example of a modern resistance movie is, *Sophie Scholl—The Final Days* (2005) a German film, directed by Marc Rothemund, about Sophie Scholl and the other student members of the White Rose resistance group in Munich in 1943, who were imprisoned and executed because they had illegally produced and distributed anti-Nazi and anti-war leaflets.¹¹⁰ The movie was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.¹¹¹

“Resistance films” made in Hollywood were a small group of movies produced under specific circumstances during World War II, which only film historians know about today. Though depictions of resistance during World War II on film have diminished, the villainous

¹⁰⁷ “Saving Private Ryan” (1998), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0120815/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0 (accessed: 10 February 2020); and “Schindler’s List” (1993), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0108052/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0 (accessed: 10 February 2020).

¹⁰⁸ “Defiance” (2008), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1034303/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0 (accessed: 10 February 2020).

¹⁰⁹ Tec Nechama, *Defiance: The Bielski Partisans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

¹¹⁰ Bridey Heing, *The White Rose Movement: Nonviolent Resistance to the Nazis* (New York: Cavendish Square, 2018).

¹¹¹ “Sophie Scholl—The Final Days” (2005), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0426578/?ref_=nv_sr_srsg_0 (accessed: 8 February 2020).

Nazi character that was established in American propaganda during the conflict has become a staple of American movies. Its endurance and popularity is far from over. Today, movies like *Inglorious Basterds* (2009), directed by American filmmaker Quentin Tarantino, use Nazis as a source of villainy and black comedy. In *Inglorious Basterds*, Nazis are the hunted prey of a Jewish-American assassin group known as “the Basterds.”¹¹² The film stylishly kills Nazis, which is a fitting culmination of the Nazi character in Hollywood films. The main Nazi character, SS officer Hans Landa played by Austrian actor Christoph Waltz, is a man with meticulous behavior and a taste for the finer things who brutally organizes the murder of the Jews. The 2019 film *Jojo Rabbit*, directed by Taika Waititi from New Zealand, is a satire of Nazism and particularly the Hitler youth.¹¹³ Nazis popularity as villains has endured, and so has their popularity as the subject of ridicule.

A potential avenue for further research would be, on the one hand, a more in-depth analysis of the 44 movies, their production and reception, content, and style as it was possible in this thesis. On the other hand, a comparative analysis of the American films set within the Pacific Theatre and produced between 1939 and 1945 would be very interesting. As noted, American movies produced during the Second World War depicted the Japanese very differently than Germans. Hollywood movies released between 1939 and 1945 about the Pacific theatre did not create a “good Japanese” character trope. The portrayal of the Japanese was much more racially charged. Émigré filmmakers and actors from Japan or the Japanese-Americans did not have any say in Hollywood’s movie production of the time.¹¹⁴

The legacy of the Hollywood films on Nazi Germany produced during the Second World War is mixed. They portrayed and explained the enemy, but did not dehumanize all

¹¹² “Inglorious Basterds” (2009), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0361748/?ref=nm_sr_srsrg_1 (accessed: 8 February 2020).

¹¹³ “Jojo Rabbit” (2019), *IMDb*, at https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2584384/?ref=nm_sr_srsrg_0 (accessed: 8 February 2020).

¹¹⁴ Fyne, *The Hollywood Propaganda of World War II*, 35.

Germans, which was positive during a war marked by extreme dehumanization and death. However, they fell short of an accurate portrayal of the situation in Nazi Germany and Nazi occupied Europe. Hollywood also depoliticized the resistance movements to make their members and their aims more accessible for the American audience. Some filmmakers did this to an extent that was arguably misleading. Regardless, despite all their limitations, the resistance movies produced in Hollywood during the Second World War at least tried to introduce Americans to the situation in Nazi Germany and occupied Europe and motivate them to support the liberation struggle of Europeans.

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Appendix

Table1: Overview of all 44 American movies released between 1939- and 1945 set in Nazi Germany and the European territories it occupied

Release Year	Title	Studio	Director (Nationality)	Screenplay	Genre
1939	<i>Espionage Agent</i>	Warner Brothers	Lloyd Bacon (American)	Robert Buckner Warren Duff Frank Donaghue	Drama, Thriller, Romance
1939	<i>Hitler—Beast of Berlin</i>	Producers Picture Corporation	Sam Newfield (American)	Fred Myton	Drama
1940	<i>The Mortal Storm</i>	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	Frank Borzage (American)	Claudine West, Hans Rameau, George Froschel	Drama
1940	<i>Four Sons</i>	Twentieth Century-Fox	Archie Mayo (American)	John Howard Lawson	Drama, War
1940	<i>The Man I Married</i>	Twentieth Century-Fox	Irving Pichel (American)	Oscar Schisgall, Oliver H.P. Garreet	Drama
1940	<i>Foreign Correspondent</i>	United Artists	Alfred Hitchcock (British)	Charles Bennett, Joan Harrison	Thriller, Mystery
1940	<i>The Great Dictator</i>	United Artists	Charles Chaplin (British)	Charles Chaplin	Comedy
1940	<i>Escape</i>	Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer	Mervyn LeRoy (American)	Arch Oboler, Marguerite Roberts, Grace Zaring Stone(novel) (as Ethel Vance)	Thriller, Drama
1941	<i>So Ends Our Night</i>	United Artists	John Cromwell (American)	Erich Maria Remarque(novel), Talbot Jennings	Drama
1941	<i>They Dare Not Love</i>	Columbia Pictures	James Whale (British)	Charles Bennett Ernest Vajda	Drama, Romance
1941	<i>Underground</i>	Warner Brothers	Vincent Sherman (American)	Edwin Justus Mayer (story) Oliver H. P. Garrett (story) Charles Grayson	Drama, Thriller
1942	<i>To Be or Not to Be</i>	United Artists	Ernst Lubitsch (German, immigrated in 1922)	Melchior Lengyel, Edwin Justus Mayer	Comedy
1942	<i>They Raid by Night</i>	Producers Releasing Corporation (PRC)	Spencer Gordon Bennet (American)	Jack Natteford	Drama, War
1942	<i>Invisible Agent</i>	Universal Pictures	Edwin Martin (American)	Curtis Siodmak	Comedy, Science Fiction
1942	<i>Berlin Correspondent</i>	United Artists	Eugene Forde (American)	Steve Fisher, Jack Andrews	Thriller, Drama

1942	<i>Desperate Journey</i>	Warner Brothers	Raoul Walsh (American)	Arthur T. Horman	Action, Drama, War
1942	<i>Hitler—Dead or Alive</i>	Ben Judell Productions	Nick Grinde (American)	Dudley Nichols, Lamar Trotti	Thriller, Comedy
1942	<i>Once Upon A Honeymoon</i>	RKO Pictures	Leo McCarey (American)	Sheridan Gibney	Comedy, Romance
1942	<i>Reunion in France</i>	Metro-Goldwyn- Mayer	Jules Dassin (American)	Jan Lustig Marvin Borowsky Marc Connelly	Drama, Romance
1942	<i>Commandos Strike at Dawn</i>	Columbia Pictures	John Farrow (Australian-born American)	C.S. Forester, Irwin Shaw	War, Drama
1943	<i>Edge of Darkness</i>	Warner Brothers	Lewis Milestone (Russian-born, American)	Robert Rossen	Drama, War
1943	<i>Hitler's Children</i>	RKO Pictures	Edward Dmytryk (Canadian-born, American)	Emmet Lavery	Drama
1943	<i>The Moon is Down</i>	Twentieth Century Fox	Irving Pichel (American)	Nunnally Johnson	Drama
1943	<i>Hangmen Also Die!</i>	United Artists	Fritz Lang (Austrian-born German)	Berthold Brecht, Fritz Lang	Thriller, Drama
1943	<i>Above Suspicion</i>	Metro-Goldwyn- Mayer	Richard Thorpe	Keith Winter Melville Baker Patricia Coleman	Drama, Thriller
1943	<i>This Land is Mine</i>	RKO Pictures	Jean Renoir (French)	Jean Renoir, Dudley Nichols	Drama
1943	<i>Hitler's Madman</i>	Metro-Goldwyn- Mayer	Douglas Sirk (Sirk)	Edna St. Vincent Millay(poem), Albrecht Joseph (story), Emil Ludwig (story)	Drama
1943	<i>Appointment in Berlin</i>	Columbia Pictures	Alfred E. Green	B.P. Fineman, Michael Hogan, Horace McCoy	Drama
1943	<i>Bomber's Moon</i>	Twentieth Century-Fox	Edward Ludwig (Russian-born, American, as "Charles Fuhr") Harold D. Schuster (American, as "Charles Fuhr")	Kenneth Gamet (Screenwriter) Aubrey Wisberg (Screenwriter) Leonard Lee (story)	Action, War, Drama
1943	<i>Hostages</i>	Paramount Pictures	Frank Tuttle (American)	Frank Butler, Lester Cole	Drama
1943	<i>The Strange Death of Adolf Hitler</i>	Universal Pictures	James P. Hogan (American)	Fritz Kortner, Joe May	Drama, Thriller
1943	<i>Paris After Dark</i>	Twentieth Century-Fox	Leonide Moguy (Russian-born French)	Harold Buchman Georges Kessel	Drama
1943	<i>The North Star</i>	Samuel Goldwyn Productions (produced by), RKO Pictures (distributed by)	Lewis Milestone (Russian-born, American)	Lillian Hellman	Drama
1944	<i>The Cross of Lorraine</i>	Metro-Goldwyn- Mayer	Fred Zinnemann (Austrian)	Helen Deutsch	Drama
1944	<i>Passport to</i>	RKO Pictures	Ray McCarey	Muriel Roy Bolton	Comedy

	<i>Destiny</i>		(American)	Val Burton	
1944	<i>None Shall Escape</i>	Columbia Pictures	Andre DeTorth (Hungarian- American)	Lester Cole	Drama
1944	<i>Song of Russia</i>	RKO Pictures	Gregory Ratoff (Russian-born American)	Leo Mittler (story) Victor Trivas (story) Guy Endore (story) Paul Jarrico (screenplay) Richard Collins (screenplay)	Romance, Music, Drama
1944	<i>The Hitler Gang</i>	Paramount Pictures	John Farrow (Australian-born American)	Frances Goodrich, Albert Hackett	Drama, biography
1944	<i>Address Unknown</i>	Columbia Pictures	William Cameron Menzies (American)	Herbert Dalmas, (Kathrine) Kressman Taylor	Drama, War
1944	<i>The Black Parachute</i>	Columbia Pictures	Lew Landers (American)	Paul Gangelin, Clarence Upson Young	Drama
1944	<i>The Seventh Cross</i>	Metro-Goldwyn- Mayer	Fred Zinnemann (Austrian)	Helen Deutsch	Drama, Thriller
1945	<i>Hotel Berlin</i>	Warner Brothers	Peter Godfrey (British)	Alvah Bessie, Jo Pagano	Drama
1945	<i>Counter-Attack</i>	Columbia Pictures	Zoltan Korda (Hungarian)	John Howard Lawson	War, Drama
1945	<i>Paris Underground</i>	United Artists	Gregory Ratoff (Russian-born American)	Boris Instler, Gertrude Purcell	Drama, Thriller