

## **Image of the Holocaust in the Cinema of East and West Germany (1950-1990) as an Instrument of the Policy of Memory**

I am Maria Frolova. My research project is on the representation of the Holocaust in the films of the GDR and the FRG (1950-1990), as an instrument of the policy of memory. My interest in this field is due to my personal experience with the topic of the Holocaust. I first learned about the extermination of Jews at the age of 19 when I watched the film “The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas” (2008). After talking with my peers and classmates, I realized that many of them had no familiarity with the Holocaust topic. This is due to the insufficient (and often completely absent) study of this topic in school history lessons. Children and teenagers are deprived of the possibility of an adequate and detailed acquaintance with the history of the Second World War and the Holocaust. Mass culture, and in particular, narrative films, are becoming an educational tool in this area.

The effect of television on the viewer, especially on the untrained viewer, lacking basic knowledge of the historical event displayed on the screen, is great and, at times, dangerous. It is very important to understand what cinema about the Holocaust brings to our consciousness, what goals it pursues, what and who shapes its content?

I decided to take the example of Germany in the second half of the 20th century. It is noteworthy because the same people turned out to be the owners of radically different memories about the Holocaust and the Third Reich. Some perceived the end of the war as a victory over Nazism and Hitler's legacy, but for others it was seen as a “national catastrophe”.

Another important factor in memory of the Holocaust was the division of Germany into two countries, which created different “ideological, economic, military and political camps.” In my study of films about the Holocaust produced in East or West Germany, I tried to answer the question - how is memory, transformed over time, reflected in Holocaust narrative cinema? The purpose of this project was to identify political and social contexts in the construction of Holocaust remembrance on the screen. The work was, first, on the selection of sources. The films I analyzed so far are not subject of research, analysis, and similar comparison elsewhere, being mentioned only in small articles and reviews. Secondly, the policy of memory is an important and pressing issues of our time - marked by the struggle for historical truth and justice. Therefore, it was important for me to try to understand in what context and what was the purpose of films that raised the theme of the Holocaust.

Films shot in Germany from the 1950s to the 1990s were produced at state-funded film studios and, accordingly, reflected the interests of the existing political regime. The GDR was influenced by the Soviet Union, the Communist regime, and could not talk about the past, without using it for current political tasks.

If, in the FRG films an attempt was made to confess guilt and to give some explanation, to analyze what happened, then in the GDR all the films addressed the blame as external, thus protecting the moral health of German citizens. For example, in the 1965 film *Chronicle of a Murder* (filmed in the GDR, but inaccessible to view these days), one of the former Nazi criminals held a high position in FRG, and the Jewess who killed him was acquitted. Thus, the filmmakers emphasized two important things: firstly, criminals prosper in FRG, and secondly, the legacy of Nazism should and can be easily destroyed. At the same time, the films of East Germany actively promoted imitation of the USSR, the idea of cooperation with the Soviet people through the creation of the image of the Soviet Army as “ours”, the long-awaited liberators from the Nazi regime (*Stars, Naked Among Wolves, Jacob the Liar*).

In FRG, films appeared only in the 70s. Such a long and stubborn silence about the past was characteristic of West German society. In part, this was “a socio-psychological means of transforming the post-war population of the country into the civil society of FRG.” But in these films there was a tendency to study and develop on the screen a Jewish theme (*David and Forbidden Love*), to the recognition and analysis of the crimes of the German people (*Wannsee Conference*).

In the postwar years, both the GDR and the FRG tried to solve many domestic political problems, unite society, reunification to create a single nation, and introduce a new state system. In such circumstances, the Holocaust theme was undesirable. Therefore, films created by order of the state adapted this theme to certain needs, smoothing corners and brightening the controversial moments of historical participation of its people in this terrible event.

Therefore, nowadays, seeing the latest cinema on the Holocaust, you need to understand exactly who created these films and why, and what message they contain for the viewer.