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"It is not enough we have lost the war – now we have to watch it!" Cinemagoers' attitudes in the Soviet occupation zone of Germany (a case study from Leipzig)

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Abstract
The immediate post-WWII years represented a period of turbulent change in many European cinema cultures – and for the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany it held true even more than for any other part of Europe. This case study examines both the new distribution system the Soviet occupation power brought to the zone and the reception of Soviet and German movies by German audiences. A collection of reports about the reaction of audiences to the Soviet movies facilitates research into attitudes to Soviet production. These reports are used for the first time for a historical research on cinema reception and give us a unique opportunity to analyse the behaviour and opinions of the post-WWII audiences through the cinemagoer´s written statements, their oral expressions written down by the cinema managers, and observations made by employees of the cinemas. The general problem Soviet production (as, in a less extreme form, any other foreign production) faced on the German market was its cultural difference and the already established expectations based on the implicit norms of a "well made movie". The prevailing evaluation of the Soviet cinema as primitive one and good enough only for children offered a chance to invert the relation between the occupier and the occupied, the custodian and the reformed, and to (re)capture the stand of cultural superiority. Through the study of reception of the Soviet movies, generally less popular as they were, the paper concludes that the enthusiastic reaction to the German production of the Nazi era goes beyond pure escapism towards the movies´ function as a confirmation of the fundamentally shaken national identity.

Keywords: audience research, post-WWII Germany, Soviet cinema, local cinema culture.

Introduction

The first few post-WWII years represent a unique rupture in continuity of cinema culture in the whole of Germany generally and in the Soviet occupation zone in particular. While many of the movie theatres reopened quickly after the arrival of the occupation forces in the destroyed cities,[1] distribution went through an unprecedented shift. As in many other defeated and occupied countries, the distribution system was derailed and the film supply went through an extreme change. But in the Soviet Occupation Zone (Sowjetische Besatzungszone - SBZ) the situation was much more polarized and persistent than in the other parts of Germany – or in the other countries of post-war Europe. While the exceptional situation of divided Berlin attracted some attention (Benninghaus, Hanisch),[2] the majority of the people living in the Soviet Occupation Zone were in a different situation to that of Berliners: in the first post-war years they had very limited access to production other than the Russian and German movies.[3] There were two distinctly polarized streams in the post-war cinema distribution: old German production, while certainly not represented by the fascist propaganda movies, still coming from the Nazi era, on one side, and Soviet movies aiming to win the occupied nation over to the Soviet political and cultural system, on the other side.[4]

A local study focused on the city of Leipzig provides us with an insight into the distribution practices used by the monopolistic post-war distributor, the Soviet company Sovexportfilm. The main merit of this locally based case study is, however, the exceptional opportunity to use the hundreds of reports that the movie theatre managers were obliged to process about the cinemagoers´ opinions – it is a chance to find out something about the meanings the audiences constructed in the parallel encounter with the two different concepts of cinema production. These reports are used for the first time for a historical research on cinema reception and give us a chance to analyse the behaviour and opinions of the post-WWII audiences through the cinemagoer´s written statements, their oral expressions written down by the cinema managers, and observations made by employees of the cinemas.[5]

The historical context I: Soviet occupation zone (SBZ) and film distribution

The Soviets in the occupation zone

In the beginning of June 1945 the four victorious powers declared a common administration of Germany and a few days later Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD) was established as the highest authority in the Soviet occupation zone.[6] Norman N. Naimark provides us with a complex overview of the way Soviets shaped the political, economical and cultural life in the SBZ.[7] They attempted to control the image of Soviet culture in the SBZ through various institutions and practices. For example, the *Kulturbund* (Cultural Union for the Democratic Renewal of Germany) was formed in July 1945, and the *Society for the Study of the Culture of the Soviet Union* (later renamed as the *Society for German-Soviet*

Friendship) was established in May 1947.[8] Cultural life was moulded by Soviets to their political goals – theatres, for example, received basic guidelines to present plays fitting one of the following categories: German and European "progressive" classics, Russian classics, German antifascist plays, or Soviet plays. However, any effort to promote Soviet culture and to establish a new system of values encountered robust obstacles. The position of Soviets as recent enemies, the years-long indoctrination with the fear of the "primitive Russians", the process of denazification implemented more rigorously than in the other zones,[9] and, last but not least, the blunders of the occupation power (acts of revenge, murders, and, above all, a massive wave of rape), were all factors that fed strong animosity towards Soviet culture including its most pervasive product: movies.

Movie distribution and exhibition in the SBZ

The Soviet Military Administration assigned film an important role in the process of anti-fascist re-education. Soviets attempted to use movies for the elimination of anti-Soviet resentment and to inscribe the values of the Soviet culture into the minds of the Germans.[10] Until the end of 1945, all the films in the Soviet Sector of Germany were distributed by *Sojuzintorgkino* (renamed Sovexportfilm /SEF/ in 1945). In December 1945, Tiul´panov´s Propaganda Administration took over the process of film exhibition.[11] The first Soviet movies designated for the Soviet occupation zone and Berlin were chosen by a group of German emigrants who returned to Germany, with the German writer Friedrich Wolf in the lead. They proposed eight features (*Chapaev* /Chapayev, 1934/, *Baltic Deputy* /Deputat Baltiki, 1936/, *The Circus* /Tsirk, 1936/, and two parts of the trilogy about Maxim Gorky, among others) and nine documentary movies (six with the topic of WWII and three showing the life in USSR)[12] – the selection anticipated the strategy which was applied by SEF in the coming months and years: a mix of historical (war) movies, biopics, and a few comedies and musicals.

The distribution of the Soviet movies was accompanied by prompt work on subtitling and dubbing, revealing the importance the occupation power ascribed to the process of spreading Soviet culture. The work started in June 1945 in Jofa-Studio in Johannisthal[13] and 23 dubbed and 7 subtitled movies were available by April 1946.[14] The ratio of German and Soviet movies screened in the movie theatres was from 30 to 40 per cent of German movies and from 60 to 70 per cent of Soviet movies at the beginning of the occupation, shifting later to slightly over 50 per cent of German pictures in the years 1947-48.[15]

Soviet movies were provided with librettos and explanatory captions (a rule Tiul´panov insisted on) making "clear the historical events and social conditions in the Soviet Union".[16] What movies to choose for the countries of the Soviet zone of influence was a persistent problem for the Soviet Ministry of Culture: the question of whether a certain movie would do more harm than good haunted the representatives of the Soviet film industry for decades – even more in the early 1950s, as film production in the USSR collapsed. But

because of the attempt to apply a radically rebuilt system of distribution, the post-war years were complicated from that point of view as well. The distribution need of the countries was supposed to be saturated by two exclusive sources: Soviet movies and indigenous production. The low production value of some of the Soviet movies was one of the problems: Major Dymshits suggested that such "primitive collective-farm movies" as *The Tractor Driver* /Traktoristy, 1939/ should not be shown to the German audiences.[17] Another source of aversion was the "realistic" cruelty and ideological schematisation of the Soviet war movies. The genre (represented by movies both from the WWII era and from more distant periods of the Russian and Soviet empires) was nevertheless essential for the "culture-political" mission of Soviet cinema in the SBZ.

At a meeting of the cinema managers with representatives of *Sovexportfilm* in April 1948 a "Mr. Grimm" gives this telling comment: "It is often said that the Soviet movies do not fit with the German mentality. To make such statement is dangerous. It could lead us to the question: what is inferior, the Soviet movies, or the German mentality?" Then he "solves" the problem by disconnecting German culture from the taste of the German people. The taste of both the viewers and the cinema-managers is allegedly deformed, the people do not know German culture's highlights (work of Schiller, Beethoven, Dürer, "let alone Marx") and their concept of culture is reputedly limited to "combed", well-dressed people – that is supposedly the reason why Germans are not able to appreciate the true and realistic Soviet movies.[18] The required aim of the movie theatres was not only to offer entertainment, but to educate people primarily. This task had a specific slant because of the denazification program in post-war Germany, but similar mission to educate a new kind of socialist man was assigned to cinema culture in the other Soviet Bloc countries as well. Mr. Grimm´s conceptualization of the German audience as immersed in the past and in delusion and, above all, as enjoying images of luxury and glamour, was widespread amongst the proponents of the "new" post-war society under the Soviet administration.[19] This rhetorical denial of the "clash of cultures" problem only highlights, however, the persistent and strongly perceived problem: how to adjust the German expectations, norms and values to the exported Soviet culture.

An analysis of the attempt to "sovietize" cinema cultures of Eastern Europe should not obscure the differences between the local conditions, based - besides political, material, or infrastructural variations - in different cultural values and traditions.[20] The representatives of the occupation power realized the distinctions – and the problems they implied. Tiuľpanov´s report on the relation between Germans and Soviet cinema, which was sent to the Soviet Minister of Culture Bolshakov, is revealing in this matter: "our art of cinema is in opposition to the traditional relation between Germans and cinema – a relation represented by the words 'cinema – a dream factory'. Many of our movies are perceived as propaganda – which is a consequence of bourgeois taste and fascist propaganda. ... two types of movies were put into the distribution plan for the second half of 1946 and the first half of 1947:

those giving an image of the new, socialist man living in new, socialist relations in USSR, and fairytale-folklore movies. ... The fact demands stronger promotion through radio, newspapers and trailers."[21] This is an apt summary of the movie distribution´s tools and goals: to (re)educate Germans and make them ready for the socialist journey the country was going to be sent on; to entertain Germans with a genre which was relatively well received in the SBZ, related to "traditional" Russian culture and was available in comparatively good production quality; to exploit all possible driving forces and media power the occupation forces had at their disposal.

Figure 1: **Gohliser Lichtspiel-Palast**, 1. 5. 1946. Leipzig city archive, StvUR, sig. 1979/7773.

The historical context II: The city of Leipzig

Forty per cent of Leipzig was destroyed and over five thousand people died during the blitzes.[22] The demographic situation was acutely abnormal as a result of wartime casualties: in the category of 19-50 years old the ratio of women to men was 2.11:1, implying a disproportion in the structure of the audience. The population dropped from 707,365 in 1939 to 584,593 in November 1945 (and 627,161 at the end of 1946, as many soldiers and prisoners of war returned home).[23]

Leipzig is situated in Sachsen, a part of Germany considered to be "red" in the 1920s.[24] The Leipzig local government elections in September 1946 were won by the *Socialist Unity Party* of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* – SED)[25] with 46.3 per cent of votes, followed by the *Liberal Democratic Party of Germany* (*Liberal-Demokratische Partei* – LDPD, 29,7 per cent)[26] and the CDU (*Christian Democratic Union* – 21,5 per cent). It certainly was not a success for the German communists, however. In spite of the traditional support for blue-collar parties in Saxony and obstructions CDU and LPD faced from the SMAD, the SED did not receive more than 50 per cent of votes in the Saxonian elections (49.1 per cent for SED, 24.7 per cent for LDP and 23.3 per cent for CDU).[27] The differences between the city´s districts were significant: while in the Northeast, East and Southwest the SED received over half of the votes (54.7; 50.2; 53.7 per cent), in the centre the votes were far more evenly distributed (36.3 for SED, 34.2 LDP and 26.5 CDU), and the two parties representing middle-

class interests (LDP and CDU) together got over 50 per cent in South and Southeast as well.[28] The total support of SED was still higher than in Jena, a city in the traditionally leftist Thuringia, where the SED reached 36 per cent.[29] With respect to the general political conditions in the SBZ and the support the SED got from the administration, the elections went discouragingly badly for the Soviets and German communists and imply continuing tension in relation to the Soviets and their cultural policy. The results of the district assembly were rather dismal for the Soviet administration – with better results in working class quarters, but the post-war dominance of the electoral college by women did not help SED to improve results, as the German women felt strong antipathy towards the SED.[30]

Figure 2: **Gohliser Lichtspiel-Palast**, 1. 5. 1946. Leipzig city archive, StvUR, sig. 1979/7772.

Positioning the Leipzig cinemas on this political map later in the article will provide us with a basic profile of the potential audiences, which is important for evaluation of the relative specificity and representativeness of Leipzig in relation to the other – potentially more middle-class – German cities: the big cities in Saxony, like Leipzig, Dresden, or Zwickau, had comparatively higher ratio of working class.

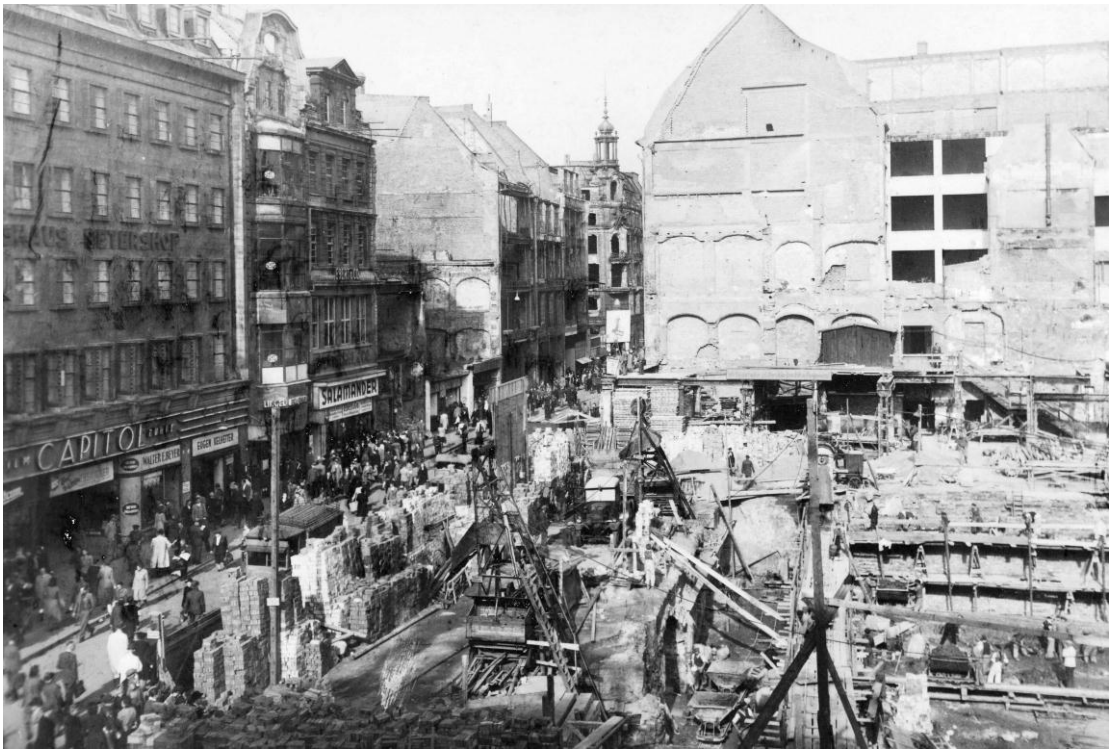

Figure 3: **Capitol**, 1948. Leipzig city archive, StvUR, sig. 1977/760.

Movie distribution and exhibition in Leipzig[31]

The movie theatres in Leipzig came back to life a few days after takeover of the city by the Soviet administration: the screening of Soviet movies was announced for 11 July 1945.[32] The re-opening of cinemas which had been closed since 17 April was based on a set of regulations for daily life in the city, published by the new city mayor Erich Zeigner and the new Police commandant.[33] Until 1948, 35 movie theatres were in operation in the city of Leipzig – a decrease of ten in comparison to the year 1935.[34] Fourteen of them were under forced administration and supervised by a trustee (*Trauhänder*),[35] 13 were operated by the city of Leipzig,[36] Sovexportfilm controlled six movie theatres (*Casino*, *Capitol*, *Regina-Palast*, *Schauburg*, *Wintergarten*, *Probstheida*),[37] another one (*U.T. Heinstraße*) was in the administration of the Red Army. *Gloria* was operated by the land Saxony which took over most of the cinemas after 1 January 1949.[38]

As in the whole occupation zone, *Sovexportfilm* was the monopolistic movie distributor – a position SEF used to force the cities' mayors (including Leipzig´s mayor Zeigner) to sign an agreement ensuring preferential treatment for Soviet movies. On the basis of a contract concluded for five years (from 1 January 1947 to 31 December 1951), *Sovexportfilm* demanded that the cinema managers of Leipzig´s theatres obtain 40 per cent of the attendance for the Soviet movies (Soviet production would get 40 per cent of the screening time). The representative of SEF, Kononenko, threatened the managers that a lower percentage of viewers would be followed by a higher ratio of screening time for the Soviet movies.[39]

A decree of SMAD determined newsreels to be an obligatory part of the program, while so called "cultural film" was a regular, but not inevitable component.[40] Some of the cultural films had strong potential as the main attraction of the program, however, and the city council proposed that *Sovexportfilm* use attractive German cultural movies as a tool to get more viewers for the Soviet movies which are "more valuable than the German ones".[41] There were two other ways to make the Soviet movies palatable to the German audiences and to adjust the cinemagoers to the different cultural norms. The first was dubbing of Soviet movies in German.[42] The second practice is introductory commentaries[43] or new scenes explicating the historical background of the movie. Despite all the effort, the average number of viewers per screening was much lower for the Soviet movies than for the German ones. The following charts offer certain insight into the popularity of the two traditions of moviemaking which dominated the post-war screens in SBZ: the Soviet movies and the German films made during the Nazi era. Despite the obvious drawbacks of the data on the average number of cinemagoers for a screening of an individual movie (it does not take into account the differences between the number of weeks the movies were kept on the programme), it is still the best indicator of the audience´s demand in this strictly top-down controlled distribution system which preferred one national production and insisted on a prescribed share of viewers for the Soviet movies.

An average number of cinemagoers for a screening in December 1945:

	Soviet movies	German movies
Kino der Jugend ("Cinema for youth")	327	914
The Soviet movies screened in the cinema during the month:	*The Red Flyer* (Valeriy Chkalov, 1941)	
Central Lichtspiele	501	710
The Childhood of Maxim Gorky (Detstvo Gorkovo, 1938) and *Wait for me* (Zhdi Menya, 1943)		
Go-Li-Pa	317	562
The Childhood of Maxim Gorky		
Filmschau Probscheida	258	366
Lenin in October (Lenin v Oktyabre, 1937) and *Wait for me*		
Albertgarten Lichtspiele	248	326
Wait for me		

Fortuna Lichtspiele	340	591
Military Secret (Poyedinok, 1945) and *Taxi to heaven* (Vozdushnyy izvozchik, 1943)		
UT Connewitz	217	506
Lenin in October and *The Childhood of Maxim Gorky*		
Germania Lichtspiele	103	252
Lenin in October		
UT Kleinszchacher	313	479
The Childhood of Maxim Gorky and *Military Secret*[44]		

In 1946, the worst attended Soviet movies reached less than 10% of the cinemas´ capacity, which testifies how deserted screenings were an integral part of the exhibition practices and cinema experience.[45] The average number of viewers per screening in 1948 was 340,[46] while the average number of seats was 570. A few Russians movies are reported to get 100% attendance in May 1947,[47] the numbers are however unreliable as a reflection of cinemagoers' interest: a plausible explanation would be that these screenings were organized for schools (three of the movies are fairytales).

The individual numbers are not very representative indication of the audience´s preferences: some of them were increased by organized screenings for schools or for employees of an enterprise, other decreased by frequent re-running of the Soviet movies. The difference between the attendance of German and Soviet production is persistent, however, and clearly indicate the popularity of the old German movies. The screenings were sold out quite often, which certainly increased the preciousness and uniqueness of watching them. French and American movies screened in the same period run with a remarkable success,[48] nor could they surpass the German production, however: *Make Love to Me* /Hab mich lieb, 1942/ reached 99% of the capacity in *Elite*, *The Police Raid* /Razzia, 1947/ 98.5% in *Gohliser* and 97.7% in *Central* (some of the post-war DEFA movies were also quite popular – *The Police Raid*, a crime story dealing with the post-war black market, was one of them).

The list of the most attended movies in 1946 in some of the Leipzig´s movie theatres clearly confirms both the demand for the familiar hits of the past decade and the fact that the movies were not kept on the programme until the moment the demand was fully saturated and the commercial potential of the movie exhausted. In the listed cinemas, the German genre movies (comedies, melodramas, operettas) from the Nazi era headed the ranking:

Film-Palast: *I Need You* /Ich brauche dich, 1944/ – 16 446 viewers (75% of max. attendance)
Palast – Theater: *At That Time* (Damals, 1943) – 7.682 (85%)
Viktoria Lichtspiele: *Operetta* (Operette, 1940) – 7.418 (99%)
Film-Eck: *How Could You Do That, Veronica!* (Wie konntest du, Veronika, 1940) – 26 096 (85%)
Eutritzscher: *The Bat* (Die Fledermaus, 1945) – 9.369 (89%)
Lichtspiele Lindenfels: *Ocean in Flames* (Brand im Ozean, 1939) – 10.362 (97%)[49]

The alarmingly poor attendance of the Soviet movies triggered a specific distribution practice: double-features assembled from a highly popular German movie and a Soviet documentary or a Soviet feature – a practice which was hated by the audiences (and repeated later in Czechoslovakia and probably in other countries of the Soviet zone).[50] The push from the Soviet administration to reach a certain share of cinemagoers for the Soviet movies led to the practice that the (usually high) attendance at the double-feature screenings was counted as an attendance of the Soviet movie – despite the audience attempting to stay just for the German feature and to skip the movie of the Soviet origin.

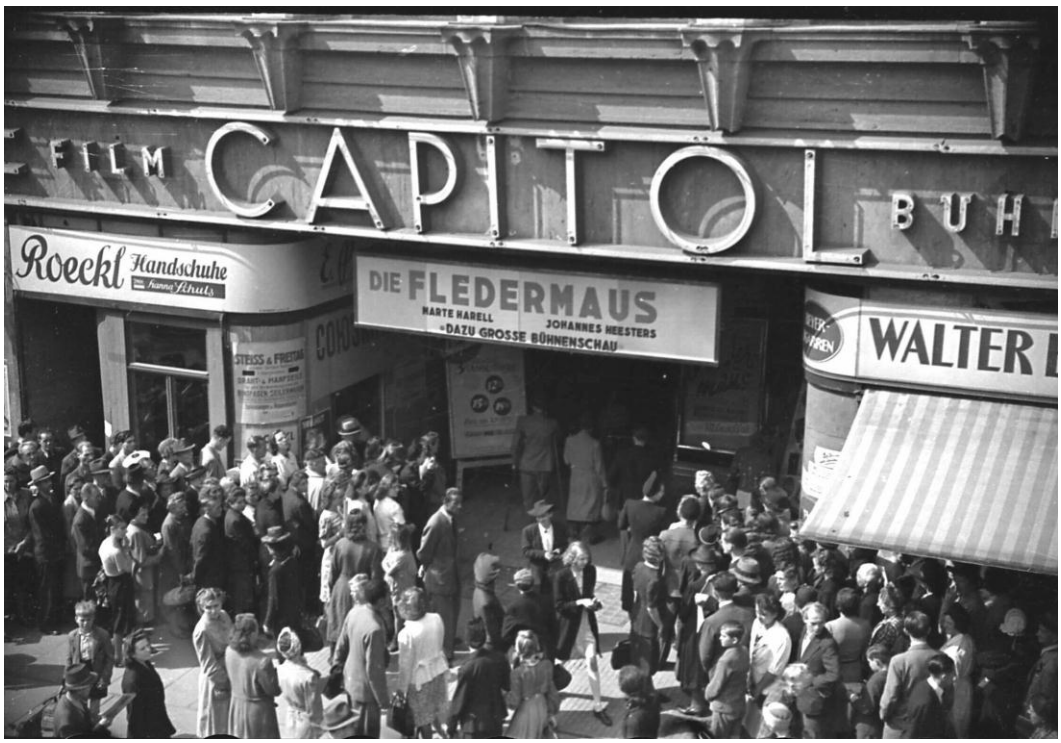

Figure 4: **Capitol**, an advertisement for the German movie *Die Fledermaus* (*The Bat*; 1945). Leipzig city archive, StvUR, sig. 1981/10006.

The reception history and its sources

The reports on the mood of the audiences (*stimmungsberichte*) were provided by the movie theatres operated by the city of Leipzig. The reports were assigned to cinema managers by

the cultural section of the city council (*Kulturamt*) in a memo from February 1946. The goal was to acquire data and collect experiences of cinema managers for "the cultural-political work *Kulturamt* is committed to". Once a month the managers were supposed to give a report containing viewers´ utterances and information about the profession and age of the speakers (the data about age and profession of the cinema-goers in the reports are very fragmentary indeed and do not allow a reliable quantification).[51] The managers were not much inclined towards such work, but the *Kulturamt* insisted on them carrying the duty out – thanks to that, we have a few hundreds of reports of different length and quality at their disposal. We certainly cannot take the "quotations" as literal records of the utterances, nor the paraphrases as fully reliable – at least some of the managers tended to make the job easier by a use of schematized descriptions. A far worse flaw is the fact that the reports were focused on the Soviet movies, as the information was supposed to help with acceptance of Soviet movies by German audiences. We can get an insight to the reception of the German movies only obliquely, when the viewers compared the screened Soviet pictures with the German ones. Despite these obvious drawbacks, the reports provide a unique opportunity to get an insight into the contemporary atmosphere in movie theatres, the role of cinema culture, and reception of specific movies.

While the contemporary reviews in newspapers and journals are both a valuable source of observations about the cinema culture and a part of the public discourse, they are not very reliable sources of information about the cinema-goers' reactions and reception. This is for general reasons related to use of such discourses as a source, as well as for specific reasons related to the post-war political regime. A complimentary report on a Berlin screening of the Soviet movie *The Circus*, published in *Tägliche Rundschau* (newspapers "for the German citizens", edited by the Red Army), describes the audiences, including "two older housewives muffled up in a quilt they brought to the cinema", which somehow sketches the atmosphere of the cinema and reminds us of the consequences of the post-war lack of fuel. The reported comments of cinema-goers provide us, however, with more complicated and contradictory image of *The Circus´* reception. The movie was comparatively well received and a cinema manager pointed out that the attendance had the same dynamics as the German movies, keeping the same number of viewers per screening until the fourth day.[52]

Four of the commentators (one of them identified as a teacher) appreciated the movie for its anti-racist attitude (the race question was excessively obvious in the movie and certainly worked as very sensitive and visible topic, thanks to the recent Nazi theory of race and practice of holocaust). One comment was markedly racist, however ("I did not like the movie. I just can´t celebrate a white woman having a baby with a black man"), and seven commentators were sharply critical. The objections were rather typical for the contemporary reaction to Soviet production and are similar to the attitudes we can meet in relation to other Soviet movies. The movie was perceived as outdated in its style, which is significantly concretized by a comparison to the German production ("the musical is

dragging. The Russian are not able to compete with our movies") – it is the indigenous tradition that represents for the most modern concept of filmmaking ("[in *The Circus*] it is the mix of humour and tragedy in an American style that has been a thing of the past for twenty years").[53] Two other remarks relate to the style, or allude explicitly to the norm of German tradition ("It´s not a musical piece at all"; "The movie is rather good, but it still is not a German one"). One of the three reactions radically denies such an experience, suggesting that it would be better to stay at home and listen to the radio.[54]

Patterns of preferences and the persistence of taste[55]

Tim Bergfelder explains the success of movies distributed by J. Arthur Rank in the British zone of post-war Germany on the basis of two factors: firstly, the conformity of the look and the movies´ content with aesthetic expectations of the German audiences and with the conventions the audiences were used to; and, secondly, the attractive locations and distant past most of the movies were situated in.[56] The escapist urge to get a temporary break from the depressing reality of the post-war situation to geographically and/or temporarily distanced utopian worlds is an ubiquitous, well-documented reception pattern, especially for the British audiences[57] – and the demand for escapist entertainment was clearly and self-reflexively stated by the contemporary audiences and present in contemporary discourse. The editorial board of Berlin´s west-zone newspaper *Telegraf* published a reader´s letter with a comment that the opinion certainly represented the wish of many cinemagoers: "[...] cinema gives life to a world of dreams and fantasies, the German cinema should offer cinemagoers a rest from everyday worries."[58]

Surveys which were done in the Western zones of Germany help us to identify the common background of the preferences both in the Western and in the Eastern zones. According to a survey undertaken between November 1945 and February 1946 in the American zone, most of the cinemagoers preferred old German movies because of their "German tone, they make more sense, are more beautiful, more personal"; and the most admired movies were *Die goldene Stadt* and *Immensee*, both with the Nazi-era star Kristina Söderbaum and directed by the prominent director of Nazi regime Veit Harlan. The relative popularity of the favourite American movies was explained by their similarity to German production ("very familiar, German style").[59] While Joseph Garncarz' ground-breaking study identified the persistence of German audiences' taste from a historical perspective (1925-1990),[60] comments in the files of OMGUS[61] tried to grasp the reasons for the restrained attitude of German audiences towards the American movies in the concrete historical moment: "...Germans are more or less homesick to hear their own language in films rather than have a language they don´t understand dinned into their ears. Secondly, they want backgrounds and themes as well as ... actors, which are familiar to them and somehow indigenous, rather than foreign backgrounds with which they have no associations. Thirdly, the carefree and superficial escapism of many pre-war American films irritates the Germans who are now faced with bitter realities."[62] The third argument contradicts the obvious popularity of the

German escapist genre movies and should be probably related to the disbelief the members of the defeated nation showed towards the cinematic images of modernity in both its versions, the Western one and the Socialist one.

The first two arguments, however, are well made and shed light upon the negative reaction to the Soviet movies in the SBZ: neither Stalinist cinema, nor Hollywood was able to win the German audience over. The differences are nevertheless significant: Soviet cinema lost the audience in a more crushing way, despite the careful and insistent presentation of *dubbed* movies and the strict way Soviets controlled the distribution. Nonetheless, Soviet movies of specific genres were still partially successful in SBZ – mainly musical comedies and fairytales. As the above mentioned case of *The Police Raid* has already indicated, the new German production of the DEFA studio was frequented by the audiences as well – three movies dealing with a love story reached 4 million viewers (*No Room for Love* /Kein Platz für Liebe, 1947/, *The Girl Christine* /Das Mädchen Christine, 1948/, *The Happy Barge Crew* /Der Kahn der fröhlichen Leute, 1949/). At least one of the DEFA anti-fascist films was attended in extremely high numbers as well: *Marriage in the Shadows* (Ehe im Schatten, 1947). The true story of the Jewish actress Meta Baer Gottschalk and her non-Jewish husband, actor Joachim Gottschalk, who committed suicide with their son, got 3 835 000 viewers during the first six months after the premiere.[63] Kurt Maetzig´s movie relied on generic conventions of melodrama, and the style of the film was rooted in the Nazi-era tradition of filmmaking.[64] In the first post-war DEFA feature, the anti-fascist *Trümmerfilm* (rubble film) *The Murderers Are Among Us* (Die Mörder sind unter uns, 1946), was not the melodramatic element as important as in *Marriage in the Shadows*.

The cinemagoers who responded to the appeal from the *Kulturamt* to comment on the movie in a written form were generally very appreciative regarding the quality of acting, dialogues or lighting as well as regarding its significance for the post-war German society. One of the eleven cinemagoers who bothered to respond sent a different message to the cinema managers, however: “All in all is the movie pretty good. You can´t say a word against the actors. But we believe that there is plenty of rubble and misery in our city, we do not have to go to a cinema to see them. We visit cinemas to find a rest and relaxation, to forget everything for two hours. And that is something you can´t even think about in the case of *The Murderers Are Among Us*. We want to provide you with advice: present more movies with Marika Rökk.” (a list of 8 movies with Rökk ends the letter).[65] In contrast to the Soviet movies with an obvious ideological message, the audiences clearly expressed their respect for the style of the DEFA movie – nevertheless, the familiar standard of the older German film entertainment re-emerged in a reaction to any other film style available on the post-war screens.

Figure 5: **Capitol**, 18. 10. 1946, premiere of the DEFA movie *Die Mörder sind unter uns*. Leipzig city archive, StvUR, sig. 1979/7186

The role of cinema-going for post-war audiences

The movie theatres were in a poor condition and the lack of fuel made it much worse during the winters – cinemas nevertheless stayed open while many stage theatres and music halls were closed down.[66] Cinema-going was a prominent free-time activity in the post-war years. Although the level of attendance did not follow the pattern we know from England, where attendance reached its historical peak in 1946, the interest in cinema was still enormous (as proven by the above mentioned utilization of the movie theatres' capacity whenever the popular German movies were screened).

The ticket prices were not negligible, as occasional complaints about wasted money or requests to return the money paid for a Russian movie prove – but they were not discouragingly high either, as the recurrent remarks on children in the audience affirm.[67] The prices, differentiated according to the quality of seats, were mostly the same as in the war and even pre-war years: from 1,20 Reichsmark to 3 RM in *Capitol*, from 1 RM to 2 RM in *Gloria* and in *Casino*, or from 0,60 RM to 1,20 RM in another 12 of the Leipzig´s movie theatres (e.g. in *Albertsgarten*, *Lichthausspielhaus* and *Kino der Jugend*).[68]

What accelerated the risk of a disappointment for a cinemagoer was a lack of information about the movies. *Sojuzintorgkino* insisted that politically important Russian movies needed strong promotion, and some of them got it (without the effect of higher attendance), but the viewers quite often went "to the cinema", instead of watching a specific movie (a habit endangered by repeated dissatisfactions with the quality of the specific movie), or picked up a movie on the basis of its title, a risky and sometimes misleading practice.[69] The newspapers of the SMAD, *Täglichen Rundschau*, published information about cinema on daily basis and promoted Soviet cinema, and specialized film journals like *Theaterdienst*

promoted the Soviet production with advertisements, reports and reviews. As for Leipzig, however, the film advertisements of the new movies in the local daily *Leipziger Volkszeitung* were very rare and the program was mostly limited to the title and perhaps the names of the actors, or a short summary of the movie.

The complaints about the (Soviet) movies and highly critical comments both reveal how important was the role of an economy of time in the relation to cinema culture, and evoke the concrete historical conditions: the profoundly disappointed viewers regret the time that would be better used by sleeping or "cooking carrots".[70] The function of cinema as a distraction was strongly perceived and related not only to the misery of the post-war national situation, public life, and general poverty, but to damaged *private* life as well, which often provided no good emotional shelter for the people: "We want to see something light and cheerful, life is so serious... in a movie theatre, one wants to have a rest from everything that is so sad at home."[71] Worry about food, housing, and heating, as well as an effort to forget losses of family members marked post-war everyday life. In such situations a movie theatre was a place for a temporary distraction, an escape from the worries of household, a cheap baby-sitter, and – in a situation in which 15% of Leipzig´s flats had been destroyed[72] – probably an alternative to a private space.

Distribution and attendance in the centre and in the peripheries

We have no data about the social composition of Leipzig´s audiences, and as I have already mentioned, the identification of the cinema-goers in the reports is too fragmentary for quantification. We can still infer some information from the data on the attendance in those movie theatres, which were located in a city quarter with a distinct class identity. It is also valuable to quantify the preference for indigenous production to the Soviet movies and to find out if there was a specific distribution and specific slant in the audiences´ choice in different city quarters.

Palast Theater (530 seats) was situated in Stötteritz, a quarter located in the south-east, rather middle-class part of the city (see the above mentioned results of elections in 1946). In Plagwitz, a western located, industrial quarter with factories and blue-collar population, the movie theatre *Lichtspiele Lindenfels* (728 seats) was operated. We can take centrally located *Film-Eck* (557 seats) into consideration for a comparative purpose (it seems reasonable to suppose that the population living in the centre was mostly white-collar, but the movie theatre audience was probably less limited to the locals, as the centre was on the way from a work for a lot of people, or could became a destination for an evening trip).
The centrally located *Film-Eck* reached by far the highest number of viewers in 1946 (627.678; 259.905 in *Palast-Theater* and 351.094 in *Lindenfels*) and the difference between the level of attendance for the German and for the Soviet movies was unambiguous in all the theatres:

	number of movies	*number of viewers*	*use of the movie theatre capacity*
***Film-Eck*:**			
German movies:	25	317.633	86.3%
Soviet movies:	25	99.437	48.4%
"coupled programs"[73]	17	210.608	82.2%
***Palast-Theater*:**			
German movies:	33	139.498	75%
Soviet movies:	27	50.335	43.3%
"coupled programs"	13	70.072	73.7%
***Lindenfels*:**			
German movies:	28	166.972	74.8%
Soviet movies:	35	72.172	44.2%
"coupled programs"	21	111.950	73.7%

The practice of coupling movies did not make the audiences indifferent towards the German part of the program, but often irritated cinema-goers and provoked them to "partisan" strategies: when the Soviet movie was screened before the German one, a part of the audience came later;[74] and when a manager tried an invert order screening, most of the visitors left the theatre after the German movie.

The preferences for specific movies do not demonstrate a strong pattern, with one exception: the two adaptations of Alexandr Ostrovsky´s plays (*Guilty without Guilt* and *The Dowerless Bride* /Bespridannitsa, 1937/) reached a far better ratio of attendance in Stötteritz, the quarter with a middle-class slant - 50% for *Guilty without Guilt*, in comparison to 30% in Plagwitz and 42% in the centre; and 70% for *The Dowerless Bride* (only 38% in *Film-Eck*, not screened in the Plagwitz´ movie theatre in 1946). The relative success of the *Bride* surprises even more in the context of the univocally negative and ridiculing comments of cinema-goers: they considered the movie confusing, ridiculous, and, above all, primitive in its style and acting.[75]

Genres, norms and expectations

According to a report from a small German city, the audience reacted to a Soviet war movie with "sobs and tears", and in January 1946, the German communist Anton Ackermann reported to the head of the informational section of the Soviet Military Administration Sergei Tiul´panov about complaints of cinemagoers regarding the historical war movie *Suvorov*.[76] The war movies and war-related documentaries were the most derided products on the screens, but Sovexportfilm did not stop screening them despite all the laments and threats reported by the cinema managers. These words, uttered after screening *Stalingrad*,

certainly expressed the feeling of many cinema-goers: "It is not enough we have lost the war – now we have to watch it!"[77]

The anger of cinema-goers was not only targeted at war movies, however. Worries about daily bread shaped the post-war experience:[78] this is an elementary framework that certainly influenced both interpretation of the screened movies and reception of the activity of cinema-going as such. People complained about the Soviet documentaries and newsreels showing an abundance of food and goods[79] - sometimes the images of modernization in the "socialist state" were perceived as untruthful propaganda ("there certainly are not so many cars in the whole Moscow").[80] Also newsreels could be ridiculed because of an obvious discrepancy with the audiences´ everyday experience,[81] and features with too noticeable ideological messages had the capacity to provoke strong resentment even in the case of otherwise acceptable genres like musical comedy.[82]

The audiences vertically differentiated the distributed movies along the national lines: the (old) German movies were perceived as entertaining and "well made", while the Soviet movies as boring, slow, hopelessly outdated, often offensive. Such differentiation is clearly visible from the kind of response repeatedly emerging in the reports: cinemagoers regularly compared the Russian movies with the German ones – to say that a Russian movie was (almost) as good as a German one was the highest form of appreciation. The German movies represented an ideal (very few American movies or stars are ever mentioned), with stars like Marika Rökk as the model of the highest quality and entertainment.

An improvement in the response to the Soviet movies could be sometimes a matter of fact, but not exactly in the way the proponents of the "new" Soviet culture hoped for. An eighteen year old girl commented on *A Girl with a Character* (Devushka s kharakterom, 1939): "you necessarily notice again and again it is a Russian movie – although they are far better than they were at the start."[83] The background for the perception of an "evolution" on the side of the Soviet cinema was not an acceptance of the Soviet aesthetic norms – rather, the audiences appreciated an occasional "improvement" in the direction of the "ideal" defined by the German production of the 1930s and 1940s. A complimentary commentary on *Russian Ballerina* (Solistka baleta, 1947) specifies what the movie lacks to fit to the taste of the audience: "The plot, as well as the love scenes, could be a little bit more suspenseful. But it is already our taste."[84] A woman tried to express her bourgeois "sensitivity" offended by watching the movie *A Musical Story* (Muzykalnaya istorya, 1941): "the women were too corpulent – it disturbs our sense of beauty. [...] We like slim and graceful shapes which could become an object of love."[85]

The Soviet movies were perceived as undeveloped, while the (older) German production represents the fully evolved film form. In a significant inversion, the movies made intentionally for children received better evaluation than most of the other production: the

Soviet fairytales were sometimes highly praised and mostly appreciated as "good for children", which meant well made products from the point of view of their genre.[86] What was perceived as the main lack of the Soviet movies is, therefore, an ability to address the grown up audience in a sophisticated way. The aversion to the recent enemy and their culture was certainly made stronger by the influence of fascist propaganda which was carried over generations[87] and through the infamous behaviour of the Russian soldiers towards Germans (theft, murder, rapes).[88] The figure of the primitive Soviet cinema good enough only for children offered a chance to invert the relation between the occupier and the occupied, the custodian and the reformed, and to (re)capture the stand of cultural superiority: certainly a valuable position for the members of the defeated, and, even worse, humiliated nation. Changing a national taste and film (or any other aesthetic) preferences certainly *is* a long-term process, as Americans saw for themselves as well in their occupation zone, even with their Hollywood products of comparatively high production value. To affirm that the Soviet cultural policy *naturally* was not successful in its goal is not enough, however. The Germans attended the Soviet movies, even if only because of the lack of information about the program, and the audiences adopted attitudes potentially stretching from radical, politically or personally motivated denial to enthusiastic acceptance of "socialist culture".

The most interesting reception pattern identified through the managers´ reports is related to the reception of the most popular, i.e. indigenous products, however. The recognition of the persistent preferences in itself does not tell us what *meanings* the recognized and reflexively accepted norms of the old German production had for its audiences. The insistent comparison with the Soviet movies implies that the meaning of the German production from the 1930s and 1940s goes beyond pure escapism towards the function of confirmation of the essentially shaken national identity and cultural superiority.

Conclusion

The general problem Soviet production (as, in a less extreme form, any other foreign production) faced on the German market was its cultural difference and the already established expectations based on the implicit norms of a "well made movie". *Sovexportfilm* assigned the cinema managers to talk to the cinemagoers and explain to them the cultural and above all the political meaning of the movies. The cinema managers in SBZ were sent on a mission which was very hard, almost impossible to accomplish: to push the (cinema)nation to accept norms and values unfamiliar and mostly alien to them. The managers were supposed to work in the position of what we could call *cultural mediators*[89] – as an intermediary between the new system of values the Stalinist Soviet Union attempted to implement, and the German audiences, which were supposed to get rid of the value system they absorbed in the Nazi time. The promoters of the Soviet cinema culture in SBZ reached the position that was not available for them in other countries – at least not till the communist putsches. As soon as the putsches took place, however, the "mediators" at the

cinematic front got the same task. In Czechoslovakia, for example,[90] they were supposed to "re-educate" the audiences and "liberate" them from the burden of "bourgeois values". The goals of the sovietized cinema culture and the tools used by the distribution system were similar, while the cultural background, rooted values and norms, and, consequently, reception were inevitably specific.

This case study tries to understand the specificity of the reception process; and the results indicate that to focus on the most popular and beloved movies is not necessarily the best – or certainly not the only – way how to understand the role of cinema culture in a historical moment and how to research the meanings certain movies or genres had for their audiences. The less popular, un-loved, or even hated movies could be very important part of cinema culture and can arouse significant modes of reception. The case of the post-war Germany is certainly specific because of its position as a defeated and occupied country – but such a problematic relationship with an un-loved and still omnipresent cinema production was typical for forty post-war years in a good part of Europe. This case study of Soviet occupiers' attempts at cultural mediation through cinema in Leipzig provides a lens through which to analyse subsequent instances of the same dynamic throughout the Soviet occupied territory.

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Notes

[1] Saxony had 422 movie theatres and 163.693 seats in 1935 – in 1946, there were still 371 movie theatres and 144 643 seats in operation (only 159 of the cinemas, however, operated on daily basis). Kurt Enz, *Entwicklung der Filmwiedergabetechnik und des Filmtheaternetzes in der DDR von 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*. Berlin: DEFA 1982, pp. 38-40.

[2] Wolfgang Mühl-Benninghaus, ‚Die zweite Stunde Null des deutschen Kinos. Alliierte Kinoprogramme in Berlin 1945/46', in Malte Hagener, Johann N. Schmidt & Michael Wedel (eds.), *Die Spur durch den Spiegel. Der Film in der Kultur der Moderne*. Berlin: Bertz Verlag 2004, pp. 207-225; Michael Hanisch, „Um 6 Uhr abends nach Kriegsende" bis „High Noon". Kino ind Film im Berlin der Nachkriegszeit 1945 – 1963. Berlin: DEFA-Stüftung 2004.

[3] There are no complex and reliable data about the foreign movies distributed in the SBZ and the GDR till 1951. Heinz Kersten alleges that the first foreign (Austrian) movies were screened in the SBZ in 1949. According to his charts, the significant extension of the offer came in 1951 (30 movies of other origin than USSR, SBZ, GDR, West Germany, or pre-1945 Germany). See Heinz Kersten, Das Filmwesen in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands, teil I. Bonn – Berlin: Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen 1963, p. 360. The inventory put together by Günter Schulz is more accurate. It lists one Austrian movie in 1946, one American film in 1948 and five foreign movies in 1949. See Ausländische Sppiel- und abendfüllende Dokumentarfilme in den Kinos der SBZ/DDR, 1945-1966: Filmografie. Berlin: Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv – DEFA-Stiftung, 2001. Nor does this list cover an amount of French, American and English movies screened in SBZ thanks to an exchange between the zones.

[4] The history of cinema reception in the Soviet-bloc countries is strongly under-researched. I did some work on the distribution and reception in Czechoslovakia in the years 1945-1970, see www.phil.muni.cz/dedur.

[5] Terrific work was done on the post-war cinema experience in the last few years in Belgium (Philippe Meers, Daniel Biltereyst & Lies Van de Vijver, 'Memories, Movies, and Cinema-Going: An Oral History Project on Film Culture in Flanders /Belgium'. In: Irmbert Schenk – Margrit Tröhler – Yvonne Zimmermann (eds.), *Film – Cinema – Spectator: Film Reception*. Marburg: Schüren 2010, pp. 319-338) and Spain (see Jo Labanyi, 'The Mediation of Everyday Life: An Oral History of Cinema-Going in 1940s and 1950s Spain'. *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas* 2, 2005, number 2, pp. 105-108). Both projects used oral history as the core source of information – a very productive approach giving unique results, but suitable only for certain research questions and dealing with specific challenges and perils, as I well know from my own experience with interviewing cinemagoers about their cinema-going habits (for the period till 1945, see http://www.phil.muni.cz/filmovebrno/?id=0&lang=1; for the postwar period, http://www.phil.muni.cz/dedur/?id=41&lang=1). To get direct temporary comments on specific movies in so high number is an invaluable source for reception history.

[6] For an overview of the SBZ/GDR history, see Hermann Weber, *Dějiny NDR*. Praha: NLN (orig. Geschichte der DDR. Mnichov: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 1999).

[7] Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949*. Cambridge – London: The Belknap Press 1995.

[8] Naimark, pp. 400-408.

[9] In the first stage of denazification, Soviet forces and German communists arrested and fired all the Nazis they were able to find; teachers, judges or police officers were dismissed en masse. Among the 553,170 Nazis in the Eastern Zone, 307,370 had been forcibly dismissed, 83,108 were prohibited from further employment, and the rest were „temporarily left in place." See Konrad H. Jarausch, *After Hitler. Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995*. Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press 2006, pp. 53-54.

[10] For an overview of the Soviet´s cultural policy in the SBZ, see Lars Karl, „Von Helden und Menschen…" Der Zweite Weltkrieg im sowjetischen Spielfilm und dessen Rezeption in der DDR, 1945-1965. Dissertation, Eberhard-Karls-Universität Tübingen, 2002, pp. 183-190; Daniela Berghahn, *Hollywood behind the Wall. The cinema of East Germany*. Manchester – New York: Manchester University Press 2005, p. 16.

[11] Naimark, 422.

[12] Wolfgang Mühl-Benninghaus, Die zweite Stunde Null des deutschen Kinos.
[13] Mühl-Benninghaus, p. 212.
[14] Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8358.
[15] See, e.g., Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8355, p. 182.
[16] Naimark, 422.
[17] Naimark, p. 421.
[18] Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8344.
[19] According to a memo sent by the Office for Enlightenment and Art to the staff of the city´s cinemas, the German cinemagoer prefers illusion to reality, likes beautiful furniture and women splendidly dressed (or not dressed at all). Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8349.
[20] For an excellent research on the influence of different cultural and professional milieu exercised on the process of Sovietization, see John Connelly, Captive University: The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1999.
[21] Moscow, RGALI, 2456, no. 116, Ministry of Cinematography.
[22] Leipzig was one of the ten German cities that were victims of a carpet bombing.
[23] Statistisches Jahrbuch der Messestadt Leipzig. 9. band 1929-1945. Stadt Leipzig 1948, p. 24.
[24] Clemens Vollnhals, Sachsen in der NS-Zeit. Leipzig: Kiepenheuer, 2002.
[25] The party emerged from a forced unification of Social Democrats (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands - SPD) with Communists (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands – KPD) in April 1946. See Fig. 4: *Gohliser Cinema* in Leipzig with a banner celebrating the unification. The two posters below endow the slogan promoting "unified Germany" with an unintentional allegorical meaning: the left poster announces the Soviet movie *Chapaev*, the right one the old German movie *Why do you lie, Elisabeth?* (Warum lügst Du, Elisabeth, 1944). They stood for the incompatible layers of historical experiences, ideological systems and national mentalities which the Soviet administration attempted to "unify": the Nazi past versus the communist future, the tradition of generic film entertainment versus the model of cinema culture as an ideological training.
[26] The party was established in July 1945 under the control of Soviet Military Administration (SMAD) as a counterweight to Christlich-Demokratische Union (CDU). See Jiří Vykoukal – Bohuslav Litera – Miroslav Tejchman, Východ. Vznik, vývoj a rozpad sovětského bloku 1944-1989. Praha: Libri 2000, pp. 108-109. At least in Thuringia, however, the political subject was established without any external control – see Mark Allinson, Politics and Popular Opinion in East Germany 1945–68. Manchester – New York: Manchester University Press 2000, p.24.
[27] Weber, Dějiny NDR, p. 71.
[28] Lieselotte Borusiak, Gertrud Höhnel, Ursula Naumann, Karin Rother, Chronik der Stadt Leipzig I. teil, 1945-46. Zweite, Überarbeitete und Erweiterte Auflage, Leipzig: Stadtarchiv Leipzig 1971.
[29] See Allinson, Politics and Popular Opinion in East Germany 1945–68, p. 49.
[30] The hostile reaction towards the SED had its roots in the affiliation of the SED with the Soviet administration which was not able to ensure food and with the Red Army whose soldiers were widely perceived as rapists. See Naimark, pp. 129-132, 328.
[31] For additional material related to the cinema culture in Leipzig and partial reconstruction of the Leipzig´ cinemas programme, see the web page launched for my research project: http://www.phil.muni.cz/leipzigcinema.

[32] Russian features (*They met in Moscow* /Svinarka i pastukh, 1944/ and *Six O´Clock in the Evening After the War* /V shest chasov vechera posle voyny, 1945/) and five Soviet documentaries with war-related topics were screened. See Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, 8340, p. 7.

[33] For an overview of the post-war changes in the structure of the Leipzig´ cinemas, see Ralph Nünthel, UT Connewitz & Co. Kinogeschichte(n) aus Leipzig-Süd. Leipzig: Sax Verlah Leipzig 2004, pp. 62-65. For complete list of Leipzig´s cinemas, see Nünthel, Johannes Nitzsche – Kinematographen & Films. Leipzig: Sax-Verlag Beucha 1999, pp. 91-132.

[34] There were 1.566 movie theatres in SBZ in 1946, 1.478 of them in service. Bolshakov´s letter to Mikoian, 15 October 1946. In: Valerij Fomin, „Političeskij effekt filma „Russkij vopros" propadajet". Iz opyta sovetizaciji poslevojennovo kinoprokata i kinoproizvodstva v Centralnoj i Vostočnoj Evrope. Kinovedčeskie zapiski 71, 2005, p. 203.

[35] *Elite-Lichtspiele* (Schleußig), *Eutritzscher* (Eutritzsch), *Filmeck* (Centrum), *Film-Palast* (Lindenau), *Lichtburg* (Centrum), *Lichtspiele Großzsocher* (Großzsocher), *Palast Theater* (Stötteritz), *UT-Lichtspiele* (Kleinzschocher), *Viktoria Lichtspiele* (Sttöteritz), *Weltspiegel Lichtspiele* (Lindenau), *Welttheater* (Reudnitz), *Lindenfels* (Plagwitz), *Ratskeller* (Knautkleeberg), *Stern* (Lößnig). Here you can find a map localizing the cinemas: http://www.phil.muni.cz/leipzigcinema//?lang=1&id=939&lang=1.

[36] *Central-Lichtspiele* (Lindenau), *Lichtschauspielhaus* (Neustadt/Neuschönefeld), *Göhliser Lichtspiel Palast – Go-Li-Pa* (Gohlis), *Edda-Lichtspiele* (Lindenau), *Albertgarten* (Anger-Crottendorf), *Kammerlichtspiele* (Centrum), *Kino der Jugend* (Centrum), *UT-Connewitz* (Connewitz), *Germania Lichtspiele* (Wahren), *UT-Lichtspiele* (Knautkleeberg), *Filmbühne Nord* (Mockau), *Olympia-Lichtspiele* (Möckern), *Hansa-Lichtspiele* (Paunsdorf).

[37] *Probstheida* was bought from the city of Leipzig by the Soviet Ministry of foreign trade and administered by Sovexportfilm from September 1947. Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8339, p. 23.

[38] Firstly Sojuzintorgkino received five of the former UFA cinemas – in August 1945, *Filmbühne Nord* and *UT-Lichtspiele* were took over back by the city of Leipzig in an exchange for *Schauburg* and *Casino-Lichtspiele*; *Probstheida* was added later. See Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8334 and 8354.

[39] Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8344. In 1946 the ratio was 70 per cent of Soviet movies and 30 per cent of German ones. See Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8355.

[40] Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8343. The structure of the program was: 1. Advertisement on slides; 2. Film advertisement; 3. Promotion of the coming cinema program; 4. gong – a newsreel; 5. gong – a cultural film; 6. the feature. See Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8349.

[41] In June 1946 *Kino der Jugend* (Cinema of Youth) screened a Soviet movie (*The Rich Bride*; Bogataya nevesta, 1938): the city council reported that two screenings were sold-out *despite* the fact that a Soviet movie was on the program. The success was attributed to the two side-programs: a German Disney-like colour animation movie *Armer Hansi* (1943) and a colour movie *Frühling in den Vogesen* (Spring in the Vogesen mountain). Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8343.

[42] The work on dubbing of Eisenstein´s *Ivan the Terrible* (Ivan Groznyy, 1944) started already in June 1945 in Jofa-Studio in Johannisthal. See Mühl-Benninghaus, p. 212.

[43] An introduction explaining „the historical meaning of the Battle of Stalingrad" in *Turning Point* (Velikiy Perelom, 1945), or new sequences clarifying events in Lermontov´s life (*Lermontov*, 1947). Moscow, RGALI, 2456, no. 116.

[44] Counted from the information in: Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig.8347.

[45] The movies filling the auditorium for 7% of the capacity: *Stalingrad* /1943/ in *Filmschau*; *Lenin in 1918* /Lenin w 1918 godu, 1939/ in *Kino der Jugend*; for 9%: *Befreite Tschechoslowakei – Kino der Jugend*; for 10%: *Chapaev* in *Albertgarten* and *U.T. Kleinzschocher*.

[46] 7 646 820 viewers for 22 522 screenings.

[47] *Immortal Kaschtschai* (Kashchey bessmertnyy, 1944) (1145 viewers), *Beautiful Vasilisa* (Vasilisa Prekrasnaya, 1939) (992 viewers), *A magical Fish* (Po shchuchemu veleniyu, 1939) (1336 viewers), *Jolly Fellows* (Vesyolye rebyata, 1934) (1117 viewers) in *Film-Palast* (with seat capacity 530 seats).

[48] The French melodrama *Love eternal* (L´éternal retour, 1943) filled in its 8 screenings for 93% of the maximum attendance, the American comedy *It Started with Eve* (1941) its 11 screenings for 82%.

[49] Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8354, pp. 210-223.

[50] The movie theatre *Film-Eck*, for example, screened 17 'coupled-programs' (*gekoppelte Filme*) during 1946. Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8354, p. 217.

[51] Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR, sig. 8349.

[52] The movie theatre managers ascribed a decisive role to word of mouth (its role was certainly strengthened by the lack of information about the program and the individual movies) – and the bad reputation of Russian movies generally and negative word of mouth about a specific picture resulted in a fast decline of the attendance.

[53] A 30 year old man.

[54] Tägliche Rundschau no. 55, May 7, 1946. Quoted in: Michael Hanisch, *Um 6 Uhr abends nach Kriegsende "bis High Noon". Kino ind Film im Berlin der Nachkriegszeit 1945 – 1963*. DEFA-Stüftung 2004, p. 9.

[55] For persistence of movie preferences which follow long-term tendencies and change in very slow rhythm, see the convincing arguments in Joseph Garncarz, 'Hollywood in Germany. The Role of American Films in Germany, 1925-1990', in David W. Ellwood & Rob Kroes (eds.), *Hollywood in Europe: Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony*. Amsterdam: VU University Press 1994, pp. 94-135; and Petr Szczepanik, Hollywood in Disguise: Practices of Exhibition and Reception of foreign Films in Czechoslovakia in the 1930s. In: Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby & Philippe Meers (eds.), *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. New Perspectives on European Cinema History*. London – New York: Routledge 2011, pp. 166-185.

[56] Tim Bergfelder, *International Adventures. German Popular Cinema and European Co-Productions in the 1960s*. New York – Oxford: Berghahn Books 2005, p. 22.

[57] Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing. Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*. London – New York: Routledge 1994.

[58] Peter Pleyer, *Deutscher Nachkriegsfilm 1946-1948*. Münster: Verlag C.J. Fahle, p. 155.

[59] Bettina Greffrath, Gesellschaftsbilder der Nachkriegszeit: Deutsche Spielfilme 1945 – 1949. Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus Verlag 1995, pp. 121-125.

[60] Garncarz, Hollywood in Germany.

[61] Office of the Military Government form Germany, United States.

[62] Quoted in Heide Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany*. Chapel Hill – London: The University of North Carolina Press, p. 62.

[63] Kersten, Das Filmwesen in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands, pp. 295-296.

[64] The cameraman for the movie was Friedl Behn-Grund, who worked for UFA for twenty years, and also the composer of the score Wolfgang Zeller had written music for UFA films, including the

infamous Veit Harlan´s *Jud Süss* (1939). See Christiane Mückenberger, 'Zeit der Hoffnungen', in Ralf Schenk (ed.), *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg*. Berlin: Henschel-Verlang 1994, pp. 41-42.

[65] Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR 8355, pp. 47-92.

[66] Naimark, p. 421.

[67] An author of a report on screening of *Nuremberg Trials* (Sud Narodov, 1947) complained of the audience consisting of about 30 adults and children up to 4 years old making a racket and laughing at images of Hitler and Göring (*Filmbühne Nord*, May 1947). Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR 8358. Such remarks support the assumption that movie theatres were used as a kind of 'babysitting', see Mühl-Benninghaus, p. 215.

[68] See Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR 8354. A ticket to a theatre in Leipzig cost from 75 pfennigs for a standing room in Operettentheater to 7 RM for the best seats in Schauspiel. Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR 4425, p. 94.

[69] A telling example: the title *Warte auf mich* for the Soviet war movie *Wait for me* misled a woman to expect an operetta. StVuR 8355, p. 26.

[70] Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR 8355, p. 139.

[71] A 30 year old woman in response to the Soviet movie *We from Kronstadt* (My iz Kronshtadta, 1936), June 6, 1947. Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR 8355.

[72] In a comparison between November 1939 and November 1945, the number of inhabitants in Leipzig fell by 17,5%. Till the end of 1946, a lot of soldiers returned home and the drop of the inhabitants was by 11.1% in comparison to the pre-war situation. The number of flats fell by 15,2% because of the bombing of the city, but the number of households stayed at the same level (an insignificant drop by 0,2%) (see Statistisches Jahrbuch der Messestadt Leipzig. 9. band 1929-1945. Stadt Leipzig, 1948, p. 24). It implies that despite the decrease in the number of the city´s inhabitants, quite a lot of incomplete families or widows had to share their flats with a lodger or with members of the older generation.

[73] A German feature with a Soviet documentary, cultural or feature movie.

[74] A report from *Central Lichtspiele*, 2 August 1946, the Soviet documentary *Liberated Czechoslovakia* (Osvobozdenaya Chekhoslovakiya, 1945) screened before the German movie *I like you so much* (So gefällst Du mir, 1941). StVuR 8355; and a report from *Kino der Jugend*, 17 May 1948 –most of the people entered the cinema when the documentary about Moscow was already finished. StVuR 8356, p. 88.

[75] StVuR 8355.

[76] Naimark, p. 420, 421.

[77] StVuR 8356.

[78] The prices of basic food were: bread (1 kg) 32 pfennigs, butter (1 kg) 400 pf., 1 egg 14 pf., milk (1 liter) 30 pf. See Statistisches Jahrbuch der Messestadt Leipzig. 9. band 1929-1945. Stadt Leipzig, 1948. These prices are misleading, however – the elementary products were handed out as rations and one kilogram of sugar cost 90 RM at the black market. Hermann Weber, Dějiny NDR. Praha: NLN, p. 43 (orig. Geschichte der DDR. Mnichov: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 1999).

[79] According to a report on a newsreel screened in *Kino der Jugend*, the audience perceived the images showing piles of fruit and cotton and the commentaries about good harvest in USSR as an open provocation. 4.1.1948, StVuR 8356, p. 154. A man complained that the Soviets should not show the German audience so much food (after screening of the documentary *Tajikistan /*Tadzhikistan, 1946/). Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR 8356, p. 113.

[80] A man in reaction to *A Girl with a Character*, October 1947, Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR 8356.

[81] The audience laughed at and commented on a newsreel claiming that German factories produce strictly for the needs of Germans – an assertion sharp contradicting the conditions of post-war reparations and exploitation of the German industry for the Soviet needs. See Stadtarchiv Leipzig, StVuR 8358.

[82] To quote the most aggressive of many complaints (after screening the socialist musical *The Rich Bride*): "It is exactly as in the Nazi era, gold flags for energizing for the work – it does not impress our workers any more. A few more such movies and stones will be thrown at the screen." The author of the comment was supposedly a SED functionary. StVuR 8355.

[83] See Stadtarchiv Leipzig, October 1947, StVuR 8356.

[84] StVuR 8356, p. 163.

[85] StVuR 8355.

[86] The many complaints following the screening of fairytales were rooted in another problem: many of the movies were shown on the evening screenings as well and were not announced properly as children's movies.

[87] See Harald Welzer – Sabine Mollerová – Karoline Tschuggnallová: „Můj děda nebyl nácek". Nacismus a holocaust v rodinné paměti. Praha: Argo 2010 (orig. „Opa war kein Nazi". Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis. Fischer Verlag, 2002). The qualitative research based on interviews with 40 families (eyewitnesses and their children) identified a topos of „primitive Russians": they gave stories about Russians who did not know the basic rules of civilization, thought that a toilet was a washbasin and a coffee grinder was a telephone. Traces of such cultural prejudices are clearly visible in the responses to Russian movies.

[88] Naimark, p. 69-140. Leipzig was liberated by the American army, replaced by the Red Army at the beginning of July (see Ingolf Bergfeld, Leipzig. Eine kleine Stadtgeschichte. Erfurt: Sutton Verlag 2002, pp. 93-104). Thanks to that, the experience with Russian army was not so drastic as in some of the other cities.

[89] In the sense the term was used, e.g., by Thunnis van Ort in his study „That pleasant feeling of peaceful coziness": Cinema Exhibition in a Dutch Mining District during the Inter-war Period. Film History 17, p. 148.

[90] I have researched the distribution system in the post-war Czechoslovakia, see The Cinematic Shapes of the Socialist Modernity Program: Ideological and Economic Parameters of Cinema Distribution in the Czech Lands, 1948-1970, in Daniel Biltereyst, Richard Maltby & Philippe Meers (eds.), *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. New Perspectives on European Cinema History*. London – New York: Routledge 2011, pp. 81-98.