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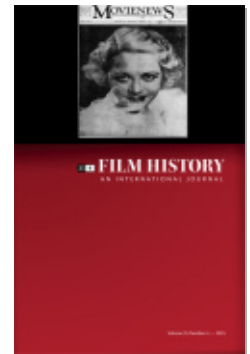
“They Saw Their Guilt on Screen:” The Archive Effects of
Death Camp Sachsenhausen (1947)

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“They Saw Their Guilt on Screen:” The Archive Effects of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* (1947)

ABSTRACT: Premiered in a Stalinist show-trial in 1947, the overlooked East German Holocaust film *Todeslager Sachsenhausen* (Death Camp Sachsenhausen) is treated at length for the first time in English. Using the framework of Jaimie Baron’s archive effect and drawing on archival records to chart the film’s production and contested reception through the end of the twentieth century, this article maps the complex and contradictory discourses of authenticity and archivality that defined its use and reuse as they intersect with volatile notions of history during German division and reunification. Analysis of the film’s heterogeneously authentic sources leads to the discovery that it was the first Holocaust film written by a Jewish Holocaust survivor.

KEYWORDS: East Germany, GDR, archive effect, compilation, nontheatrical, Holocaust, Shoah, evidence, museum, historiography, memory culture, socialism

Upon entering the onsite cinema at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp memorial near Berlin around 1996, visitors were greeted with the following letter:

To the Viewers of the Historical Documentary Film Death Camp Sachsenhausen:

Dear visitors,

The documentary film you are about to see, Death Camp Sachsenhausen, was shot on behalf of the Red Army by a German film crew in 1945 and 1946, while thousands of prisoners of the Soviet Special Camp No. 7 were dying of hunger and disease in former concentration camp barracks. The film is a typical product of its time, with strengths and weaknesses that can be explained, on the one hand,

by the still insufficient knowledge about the history and significance of the concentration camps and, on the other hand, by the political views of the respective Allies, in this case the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, we show this film because:

1. *It is a typical contemporary historical document, similar to other early films about concentration camps made in the USA or Great Britain; because*
2. *it contains predominantly authentic film material about the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, which is irreplaceable. Furthermore;*
3. *the statements made in the film about the concrete history of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp are not fundamentally wrong, even according to the latest state of knowledge. Finally;*
4. *the memorial has no alternative at present, since we do not have better films at our disposal.*

Should you have further questions about the film Death Camp Sachsenhausen, please direct them to the visitor's services department.

Dr. Morsch

Director of the Museum and Memorial Sachsenhausen¹

The letter reflected five years of intense public discourse over the authenticity and value of the East German Holocaust documentary *Todeslager Sachsenhausen* (Death Camp Sachsenhausen; 1947, dir. Richard Brandt) in the wake of German reunification. What made this film so dangerous, and yet so indispensable, that it continued to be an object of controversy some fifty years after its production?

Death Camp Sachsenhausen premiered on October 24, 1947 in a courtroom in Soviet-occupied Pankow, near Berlin. It was presented as a piece of evidence in the Soviet show trial of the SS personnel of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. After its premiere, the film was defined by a turbulent, diverse, hotly contested, and almost wholly untreated reception history, which saw its value, authenticity, and provenance continually reevaluated. Comprised of an undifferentiated mixture of Weimar, Nazi, and Soviet footage with some of the only material shot in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in the wake of liberation, all stitched together with high-Stalinist rhetoric in voiceover, *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* was viewed throughout the postwar decades as a fraught document, accompanied by increasingly baroque and proscribed techniques of viewing, use, and reuse.

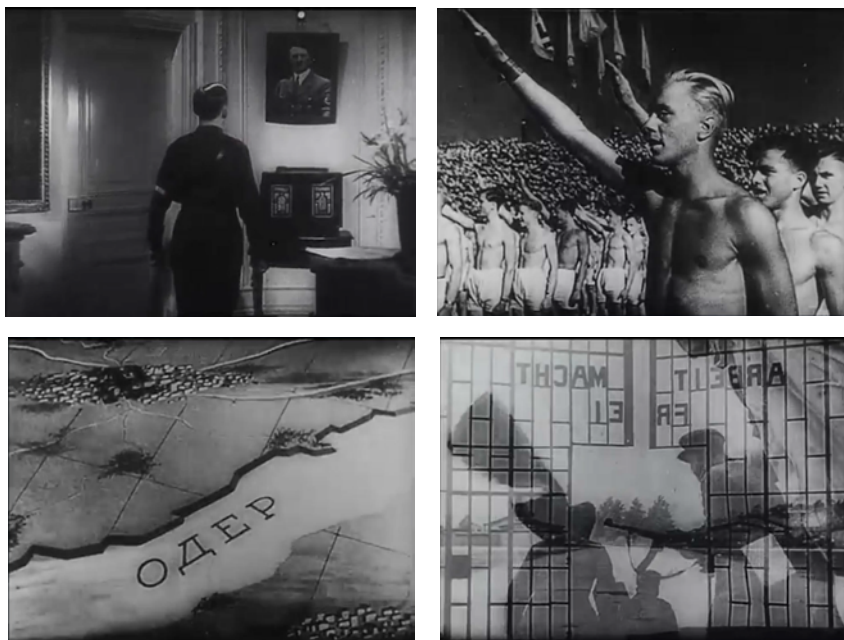
In what follows, I will catalog the provenance of the footage from which the film was compiled and give an account of the film's many uses between 1947 and the 1999, contextualized in the development of postwar German memory culture. Following the framework of Jaimie Baron's archive effect, I aim to historicize the heterogeneous notions of archivality, evidence, and history that accompanied the film's reception, in which highly didactic institutional contexts variously proscribed or prohibited the emergence of archive effects among viewers. This extraordinary reception, I argue, prompts an expansion of Baron's account of the archive effect—a phenomenological viewer-text experience of appropriated footage in a compilation or archival film as "archival" as such, emergent from subjective recognition of temporal and intentional disparities between footage, rather than from the factual provenance of a film's constituent footage—which emphasizes the extratextual inhibition or solicitation of such an effect within the viewer-text relationship.

COMPOSITION AND PROVENANCE

In the sole extant version of the film,² *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* is divisible into three acts: the first act, an expository sequence of around eight minutes, depicts the attractive, cosmopolitan façade of Nazi-era Berlin, evoking the city symphony, then moves on to the city's underlying violence and repression, rendered in kidnappings, shadowy figures, and Nazi marches. A travel sequence to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, "only 30 kilometers from Berlin," follows, offering glimpses at the barbed wire, camp gates, and prisoners' marching feet. An animated sequence of the Red Army's march from the river Vistula to the river Oder follows until the Soviet flag is raised over the Reichstag. Locations of concentration camps over occupied Europe are illustrated with a looming spider and its web, casting a shadow over a map of Europe in turn lit by a large swastika. A short text crawl estimates the number of deaths at Sachsenhausen at 100,000, emphasizing the fate of 18,000 murdered Soviet prisoners of war while making no mention of Jewish prisoners.

The second act starts with the hands of former Sachsenhausen prisoner Fritz Börner sifting through a pile of passports and displaying selected pages to the camera. Börner, aided by the impassioned expository narration that runs throughout the film, then silently tours the camera around the camp, giving a spatial overview over the complex and demonstrating methods of imprisonment, torture, and execution. Footage of Börner's eerie tour is intercut with film footage and selected photographs of prisoners' corpses, mountains of their remains and their personal effects, and the emaciated bodies of survivors.

The third and final act of the film, and the only part with synchronized dialogue, depicts a Red Army investigative commission's interview with the



Figs. 1–4: Nazi (top) and Soviet (bottom) footage in the first act of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*. ©DEFA-Stiftung, Otto Baecker.

Kapo Paul Sakowski at Sachsenhausen, accompanied by Börner. Sakowski, periodically prompted by the Red Army commission's officers in heavily accented German, verbally continues Börner's demonstration of the camp's methods and facilities for mass torture, murder, and cremation. Sakowski describes his own participation in Sachsenhausen's machinery of death, including hanging, shooting, gassing, and removing gold teeth from the murdered. A short closing sequence lines up the accused SS camp personnel, who, along with Sakowski himself, were tried at the 1947 trial and declares that the atrocities committed in the camp will never be forgotten. The film ends as the voiceover optimistically intones: "The dream of a free, fair world will be realized."

Death Camp Sachsenhausen's three acts roughly correspond to three different categories of material—and three different approaches to compilation. The first act is almost wholly composed of footage shot from the beginning of the Nazi era to the end of the war; the only "new" material shot for the film in this first section are to be found in the short travel sequence to the camp and the passing shots of the camp.³ Both the sequences of Berlin and of Nazi marches are drawn from Nazi-era German narrative and documentary film,

including Leni Riefenstahl's 1935 *Triumph des Willens* (Triumph of the Will), Fritz Boehner's 1936 *Olympiastadt Berlin* (Olympic City Berlin),⁴ and Wolfgang Liebeneiner's 1943 *Großstadtmelodie* (Melody of a Great City) (see figs. 1–2). The liberation sequence, including the animated map of the Red Army's offense across Europe, which is labeled in Russian, makes use of a long sequence from the Soviet film *Берлин* (The Fall of Berlin, 1945, dir. Elizaveta Svilova) (see figs. 3–4). This section foregrounds its archival status in its editing and in its critical, largely past-tense voiceover. In foregrounding this status, the film solicits what Baron, in her framework of the archive effect, terms temporal and intentional disparities, each of which catalyze the experience of archive effect: that is, “the perception by the viewer of an appropriation film of a ‘then’ and a ‘now’ generated within a single text” and “a disparity based on our perception of a previous intention ascribed to and (seemingly) inscribed within the archival document,”⁵ respectively.

By contrast, the second and third sections of the film, though they also contain a great deal of footage not shot for *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*, give no hint to the mixed provenance of their constituent footage, inhibiting both the viewer's perception of temporal or intentional disparities and the viewer's experience of the archive effect from arising. In these sections, photographs and film footage of other concentration camps are cut together seamlessly with footage filmed for *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* by Brandt and his team at the newly founded East German state film studio Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA) between the summer of 1946 and the winter of 1947, while the concentration camp site was in use as a Soviet prison camp for political prisoners. (As the film's production file testifies that work on the film, including shooting this new material, continued until at least January of 1947, I date the film to 1947, rather than the current dating of 1946.)⁶ Thus, footage that depicts the actual state of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp site at the time of filming, including images of mountains of teeth and hair, as well as the sequences with Börner and Sakowski, mixes unmarked images with photographs and footage both temporally and spatially discontinuous from Sachsenhausen, even when montage suggests continuity of place, object, and time.

This supplemental footage was sourced from Elizaveta Svilova's 1945 *Освенцим* (Auschwitz) from an unfinished Soviet documentary on the concentration camp Stutthof, near Gdansk, and from *Majdanek—Cmentarzysko Europy* (Majdanek—Cemetery of Europe, 1944, dir. Aleksander Ford).⁷ From the Auschwitz film, Brandt makes extensive use of footage of corpses, emaciated survivors at liberation, piles of clothing and shoes, and, curiously, a single shot of a collection of pliers in the third section of the film. Indeed, *all* film footage of both corpses and the imprisoned at liberation in *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* are

lifted from Svilova's *Auschwitz* or Ford's *Majdanek*—other footage of prisoners in the film, including a repeated close sequence of prisoners' feet passing by the camera (see fig. 5), depicts inmates not of the Nazi-run Sachsenhausen concentration camp, but of the Soviet prison camp at Sachsenhausen in 1946 or 1947.⁸

Per the German film historian Günter Agde,

With the excerpts from other concentration camp films and the black-and-white photos, fact-holes were meant to be filled, the viewer's shock was meant to be intensified, the authenticity of what was disclosed was to be supported, the argument to be conclusively proven.⁹

Yet the film's elision of disparate sources did not always succeed in masking its heterogeneity, nor in buttressing its persuasive rhetoric. By the end of the 20th century, academic and public discourse around the film's differentiated provenance, its authenticity, and its relation to the NKVD Special Camp No. 7 would significantly inflect its reception, renegotiating the relationship between the film's constituent parts and catalyzing the emergence of archive effects where



Fig. 5: Prisoners' feet at the Soviet Special Camp in Sachsenhausen, from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*. ©DEFA-Stiftung, Otto Baecker.

they had previously been repressed. To draw this arc from inhibition to solicitation of archive effects in the film's reception, influenced as it was by extratextual institutional contexts and their attendant discourses, we must first turn to its production for and deployment in its original juridical context.

“THEY SAW THEIR GUILT ON SCREEN”: *DEATH CAMP SACHSENHAUSEN* IN THE COURTROOM

Death Camp Sachsenhausen's director, Richard Brandt, was born in Berlin in 1897. Fittingly to his operations of reuse and refitting in *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*, he was trained as an upholsterer, spending much of the interwar period building sets in the epic theater milieu in Berlin and abroad in Europe and North Africa. On the eve of the Nazi ascension to power, he gained a post at the eminent German production company UFA and was sent to Turkey and Croatia to produce newsreels for the *Deutsche Wochenschau*,¹⁰ a central apparatus of the Nazi propaganda machine. While in Zagreb, Brandt was involved in sabotage efforts on behalf of Yugoslav partisans.¹¹ Upon his return to Germany postwar, he joined the new Socialist Unity Party and was a founding member of DEFA in the Soviet Occupation Zone, where he was responsible for documentary and newsreel production until 1949.¹²

On January 2, 1947, Richard Brandt met with Major Chernyschov, of the Soviet Military Command of Berlin, to discuss Soviet interest in *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*.¹³ Brandt had independently begun work on the film, initially under the title *Lager bei Berlin* (Camp by Berlin), in 1946, producing a film of 600–700 meters.¹⁴ From this material, the Soviet Military Command wished to construct a longer documentary film, with the stipulation of editorial authority over the voiceover text.¹⁵ Though the correspondence between Brandt and Chernyschov makes no explicit reference to the upcoming trial of concentration camp personnel at Sachsenhausen, the film's debut would be as a piece of evidence in the 1947 Sachsenhausen trial.

In front of international press, the Russian-German interpreter and future directorial superstar of East German cinema Konrad Wolf (who would later reuse scenes from the film in his own work, as I will discuss later), Paul Sakowski, and fourteen other defendants, *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* was screened on the afternoon of the trial's second day. Accounts of the film's screening in contemporary Soviet-backed newspapers emphasize the affective dimensions of the film in the trial. Per the Soviet-backed *Neue Zeit*:

For a better understanding of the spatial context, a documentary film which was filmed in the Sachsenhausen camp after liberation was shown in the courtroom. This film showed the full extent

of the crimes on trial with particular clarity, and rivetingly conveyed the horror that gripped the hundreds of thousands of victims in the midst of this factory for the destruction of human life, a factory equipped with the latest technical refinement. In view of the evidence gathered against them, the two main defendants confessed their guilt without qualification.¹⁶

The *Berliner Zeitung*'s account of the screening goes even further in underscoring the emotional swaying power of the film, in an article fittingly titled "The Horror of Sachsenhausen": "After this interrogation, a documentary film about Sachsenhausen was shown, which showed shocking footage of the many execution and extermination sites. None of those present could ward off their terror."¹⁷

The unusual use of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* as an item of evidence in the Sachsenhausen trial had a recent, high-profile precedent in the four films screened and submitted as evidence in the Nuremberg Trials of 1945–46. Film's evidential use was unprecedented in both the Anglo-American and Soviet judicial traditions¹⁸ and was only made possible by the Nuremberg trial's special status as an international military tribunal outside of the aegis of an established legal system, which loosened procedural strictures; the tribunal stated an explicit desire "not [to] be bound by technical rules of evidence" and to "admit any evidence which it deems to have probative value."¹⁹ To corroborate the veracity and evidential admissibility of the first film shown, the American *Nazi Concentration Camps* (1945, dir. George Stevens), and to "support a novel understanding of the documentary as a privileged witness independently competent to swear to the truth of its own images,"²⁰ per Lawrence Douglas, the American defense inserted multiple affidavits into the film itself, displayed visually and intoned by voiceover, that testified to the provenance and originality of the material used in the film. The three Soviet films shown at Nuremberg followed suit.²¹

But *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* contains no such affidavits—and, indeed, its material would be unable to meet the standards of provenance and authenticity that the Nuremberg films foregrounded. Though *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* also operates as juridical evidence, undoubtedly influenced by the use of film at the Nuremberg trials, and audiovisually renders Nazi atrocities to "offer undeniable proof of a reality that might seem invented or exaggerated if recounted through written or spoken testimony,"²² the comparatively loosened evidential standards of the Soviet show trial *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* was screened in negate the need for thorough, testimonial authentication. Nevertheless, *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*'s status as submitted and accepted evidence, particularly in the wake of the meticulously authenticated Nuremberg films, implies its

authenticity by virtue of its state-sanctioned nature, repressing the recognition of its heterogeneous composition.

Aside from its initial context, its subject matter, and the use of material from Majdanek and Auschwitz, which it shares with the first Soviet film shown at Nuremberg,²³ *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* bears little resemblance to any of the Nuremberg films. But it does bear an uncanny resemblance to the 1944 Majdanek film—even beyond the two’s shared (reused) footage. Both are roughly structured into a three-part dramatic structure that opens with the respective cities by the camp, followed by silent atrocity footage, then by sync-sound interviews with perpetrators and victims; both are similarly scored and have similar voiceovers; both contain a narrative frame in the third section of a Soviet investigatory commission sitting around an outdoor table, interviewing witnesses onsite at the camp, which embed juridical authority into each film; both contain sequences of hands sifting through passports and presenting individual exemplars to the camera, shot almost identically; and both, like many Soviet and later East German Holocaust films, didactically emphasize the industrial nature of the concentration camps and the literal commodification of human remains for industrial purposes.

Though the 1944 Majdanek film was screened for public audiences in standard cinemas rather than directly used as evidence in a trial as the Nuremberg films or *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* were, *Majdanek—Cemetery of Europe* nevertheless has what Natascha Drubek-Meyer terms a “para-juridical” dimension in its rhetoric and structure.²⁴ She identifies this “para-juridical” aspect as, among other functions, primarily serving to persuade the Polish public to go along with the 1944 Lublin war crime trial against the Majdanek extermination camp officials.²⁵ The rhetorical and figural techniques *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* shares with *Majdanek*, then, point to a similar “para-juridical” use, despite the fact that *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* was an object of evidence rather than a theatrical film: in line with the pre-hoc judgments of the Soviet show trial, the function of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*’s evidence is less to establish or corroborate facts from which a judgment might be reached than to convince the public “audience” of the show-trial, through essentially affective rhetoric, that the inevitable outcome is just, as is reflected in the newspaper accounts of its courtroom premiere.

Death Camp Sachsenhausen’s use in the courtroom was not confined to the Soviet show trial context, however. In 1955, the Sachsenhausen SS functionaries Gustav Sorge and Wilhelm Schubert, tried in the same 1947 trial, were extradited from the Soviet Union, where they were serving life sentences of hard labor, to West Germany. There, they were retried in the 1958–59 Bonn Sachsenhausen Trial, one of the first concentration camp personnel trials in

the young Federal Republic.²⁶ In an extraordinary instance of mediated viewing, during the trial, Schubert and Sorge were led to a screening room at the University of Bonn in handcuffs and made to watch the film with “around 1000 viewers, including the members of the court and students from Bonn.”²⁷ The December 10, 1958, edition of the tabloid *Bild* printed a labeled image of Sorge and Schubert at the screening under the title “They saw their guilt on screen!” (see fig. 6). In contradiction to Günter Agde’s claim that only short scenes from the film were played at the 1958 trial, “which were interestingly cut such that no



Fig. 6: Photograph of Gustav Sorge and Wilhelm Schubert watching *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* in handcuffs during their Bonn retrial. From *Bild-Zeitung*, “Sie sahen ihre Schuld auf der Leinwand,” October 12, 1958. ©Axel-Springer Verlag.

people were visible,”²⁸ *Bild*’s account suggests that the entire film was shown, as it cites a length of forty-five minutes (compared to the extant version’s length of thirty-eight minutes), and mentions no cuts.²⁹ As in the 1947 trial, the film’s primary purpose remained less strictly evidential than affective, theatrically proclaiming the guilt of the SS officers and the righteousness of their persecution, this time refracted through images of Schubert and Sorge both on and in front of the screen. Despite rising German-German tensions and the decidedly tighter juridical hermeneutics of a Western courtroom, *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*’s troubled authenticity escapes scrutiny. The “seams” between the distinct elements of the film’s constituent footage, in Baron’s terminology,³⁰ are further repressed by the implication of authenticity lent by its juridical admission; the extratextual context of the courtroom’s implied evidential standards repress the emergence of an archive effect in the film’s concentration camp sequences in both instances, setting a powerful precedent for the film’s subsequent evaluation and use.

FILMIC AFTERLIVES: THEATRICAL RECEPTION AND ARCHIVAL REUSE

Not all of the film’s reception took place outside of a traditional theatrical context. *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* did see one-off theatrical runs—and more extensive use as it was excerpted in documentary and narrative film. Though its circulation in the time immediately following its 1947 courtroom premiere remains unclear,³¹ *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* was almost immediately removed from regular circulation by the DEFA-Studio für Wochenschau und Dokumentarfilme (DEFA-Studio for Newsreels and Documentary Film) and the governmental Hauptverwaltung Film Berlin and was available only on a non-circulating basis by special permission until 1961. In a note from October 1956 rejecting a request for the film from a GDR magazine, the film is described as “having been recorded as political documentation and not intended for publication.”³² This special permission was granted, if only a handful of times: records exist of public screenings of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* twice in 1956, once in 1957, and, as discussed above, once during the 1958–59 Bonn trial.³³

The occasion for which *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* was first screened in a cinema, nine years after its courtroom debut, was not billed as a theatrical premiere. Announcements of the event in Berlin newspapers describe the screening as taking place during a “Rally Against the Bonn Jew-Murderers”³⁴ on March 11, 1956³⁵ in the historic Babylon cinema in East Berlin. This rally-cum-screening was organized by the East German Committee of Antifascist Resistance Fighters, as well as East Berlin’s small Jewish community, the *Jüdische Gemeinde von Groß-Berlin*,³⁶ and included speeches from Helene Weigel, noted actress,

artistic director of the Berliner Ensemble until her death, and Bertolt Brecht's wife,³⁷ and Martin Riesenburger, the Rabbi of the *Jüdische Gemeinde von Groß-Berlin* and later National Rabbi of the GDR.³⁸

That the event was framed around Jewishness, despite the film making no mention of the persecution and mass murder of Jews in the Nazi era, reflects the instrumentalization of Judaism and the Holocaust toward geopolitical goals that was characteristic of the contemporary East German approach to remembering the Holocaust. By the mid-1950s, East German memorialization of Jewish persecution in the Holocaust had become inextricable from hostilities toward West Germany: even Kristallnacht commemorations were used "to draw attention to the prominence of former Nazis and war criminals, as well as to anti-Semitism, in the FRG."³⁹ *Death Camp Sachsenhausen's* mobilization in this highly circumscribed didactic context directs attention away from its own text as the film's para-judicial evidential pathos is neatly translated from its juridical use to a new use as a graphic visual attraction, providing visceral justification for East Germany's emerging antifascist raison d'état.

This odd Babylon debut was the only screening of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* in a standard cinema in the history of the GDR. After reunification, however, *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* gained a more significant foothold in the theatrical circuit. This began in 1996, when the film was shown at the 42nd International Short Film Days in Oberhausen, in the former West,⁴⁰ and was poetically continued on June 6, 1997, when *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* returned to the venue of its premiere, the Babylon cinema in Berlin.⁴¹ Documented screenings thereafter exclusively frame the film as a historical document, have mostly taken place at museum cinemas,⁴² and increasingly emphasize the heterogeneous provenance of the film.

Though *Death Camp Sachsenhausen's* theatrical reception in the East was extremely limited, footage from the film enjoyed prolific circulation as it was reused elsewhere. As *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* was remetabolized from an assembly of archival footage to a source of archival footage for other films, both the relation between the constituent parts of its own text and the relation to other sources of footage in the films it was reused in remained contested. Most (though not all) of the films in which footage from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* is used formally solicit an archive effect, beginning with the Soviet newsreel *Берлинский процесс* (Berlin Trial, Central Studio for Documentary Film, 1948), which mixes footage from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* with footage from the 1947 Sachsenhausen trial,⁴³ structured such that the perception of a temporal disparity between the categories of footage is unavoidable.

In the same year, the East German short *Mahnung und Verpflichtung* (Warning and Obligation, dir. Max Jaap) would reuse the concentration camp

map spiderweb graphic from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*⁴⁴ without any clear indication of the graphic's borrowed status. A similar elision of the footage's archival status occurs in the 1961 film *Buchenwald* (dir. Günter Weschke), produced as the introductory film for the museum and memorial at the Buchenwald concentration camp site in East Germany, occurs when Weschke reproduces a number of sequences shot for *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*, including a shot of dogs barking over a barbed-wire fence and a shot of two mobile crematoria that had originally been produced with the aid of Soviet political prisoners.⁴⁵ Here, the Sachsenhausen footage exists in temporal disparity from the voiceover (and from footage shot closer to 1961), but is imperceptible as distinct from footage of Buchenwald.

By contrast, in the 1961 *Gelöbniß von Sachsenhausen* (Vow of Sachsenhausen, dir. Rolf Schnabel), a twenty-minute special reel that commemorated the opening of the museum and memorial at the Sachsenhausen site, a sequence of footage from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* alongside photos and film of unknown provenance is demarcated by the narrator's description of the sequence as "documents from the time of barbarism." Likewise, Sachsenhausen footage in the East German newsreels *Augenzeuge 1956/6* and *1978/50* solicit distinct temporal disparities with the other footage in the reels; the latter reuses a short edited sequence of footage from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* that is lifted from the former. Both contain footage shot at Sachsenhausen and Auschwitz, rendered even less distinguishable as distinct than they are in the original by their double reuse and shortened shot length. The 1971 *DDR-Magazin 1971/11*, a "magazine" film intended for international consumption, foregrounds the archival status of the *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* footage it uses to discuss the history of DEFA and, fittingly, the State Film Archive of the GDR.

Most notably, however, footage from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* is used in Konrad Wolf's 1968 film *Ich war Neunzehn* (I was nineteen). One of two uses of material from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* in a narrative film,⁴⁶ *Ich war Neunzehn* tells a semi-autobiographical story of a German Communist exile raised in the Soviet Union as he returns to Germany with a Red Army scouting group toward the end of the war.

Death Camp Sachsenhausen is used at length during a sequence of the protagonist Gregor's troupe liberating Sachsenhausen, which is never directly represented. Before the section from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* begins, a shot of the gates of the camp that does not originate from the film is superimposed with the text "AN EXECUTIONER FROM SACHSENHAUSEN TESTIFIES/DOCUMENTARY FILM," clearly demarcating the archival status of the footage to come. A challenging montage follows, where clips from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* of Sakowski explaining the workings of the gas

chamber, disguised as a shower-room, cut back and forth with footage of Gregor showering.⁴⁷

This sequence can be understood in the context of a contemporary tendency in East German narrative film toward documentary-narrative mixture, described by Anne Barnert as documentary realism.⁴⁸ Collapsing these two constitutive categories seems, despite the compartmentalization of the sequences via intertitle and Wolf's insistence in interviews that the film bore little relation to the documentary, to have been a goal of this sequence; indeed, Wolf even tailored the stock on which *I Was Nineteen* was shot to match that of wartime footage.⁴⁹ Wolf's elision was perhaps *too* successful—in an extraordinary instance of a failed solicitation of the archive effect, audiences reported being unable to distinguish between the documentary and fictive modes in the film despite the intertitle, believing the scenes from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* to be poorly acted narrative sequences.⁵⁰ Thomas Elsaesser identifies the “perceptual turbulence” of Wolf's “movement between the factual and fictional” in and around the Sachsenhausen sequence as a contribution to the “dimension of ‘authenticity as simulation’” that Wolf evokes in the film, transforming cinema into a “time machine of historical simulation” in advance of the New German Cinema.⁵¹

Wolf's choice to draw on documentary's evidentiary matrix by representing the camp via *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* is troubled not only by the documentary's own “simulated authenticity”—insofar as the reproduced footage of Sakowski constitutes not an authentic document of the Nazi camp system, but a record of the NKVD Special Camp #7—but also by Wolf's own history with the film. Wolf had encountered the film both as introductory film at the Sachsenhausen site in the 1960s and, more importantly, had almost certainly seen the film at its 1947 courtroom premiere; at the 1947 trial, Wolf was not only present but served as an interpreter for Sakowski himself.⁵² Though their common upbringing would diverge significantly in the course of the war, both Wolf and Sakowski were German communists raised in Soviet exile, a fact that would have been known to Wolf from his experience in the Pankow courtroom. Thus, to formally encode comparison between himself, focalized via the autobiographic figure of Gregor, and Sakowski, a perpetrator intercut with Gregor, wrinkles the autobiographical constellation of the film, inscribing Wolf's parallels and connections to the perpetrator class via Sakowski and troubling the black-and-white antifascist themes of the film.

This repressed superposition of victim and perpetrator is perhaps fitting to the fraught state of Holocaust memorialization in the GDR, in which the notion that “communists were the first and most important victims of Nazism”⁵³ dominated official discourse. Continuity was drawn between German Communists imprisoned by the Nazis and the East German population,

a matter that absolved East Germany of responsibility for the Holocaust and was thus foundational to the state's self-legitimizing founding myth—a myth that would be renewed and enacted on the site of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp with the aid of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*.

ONSITE USE AT THE SACHSENHAUSEN MEMORIAL

Indeed, *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* would enjoy its most prolific—and controversial—reception not in the many cinemas in which *I Was Nineteen* was globally shown, but in the small museum cinema at the Nationale Mahn-und-Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen (National Memorial and Monument Sachsenhausen, hereafter referred to as NMG). The NMG opened on the site of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in April 1961, between the beginning of the Eichmann trial and the construction of the Berlin Wall, and was the third of three concentration camp memorials opened in the GDR, all of which predated the first West German camp memorial, opened in Dachau in 1964. As the sole camp site near Berlin, the GDR's capital, largest city, and its center of cultural and intellectual life, it constituted an internationally facing flagship of the GDR's reckoning with the past. Characteristically for the memory culture of the GDR, the NMG thus emphasized the triumph of antifascism over fascism via the resistance, martyrdom, and solidarity of imprisoned antifascists and Soviet prisoners of war, denying the centrality of anti-Semitism and racism in Nazi ideology and refracting their memorialization simultaneously against West Germany and toward East German self-legitimization. Anti-Semitism was instead described as an “expression of the profit motive of the ruling class,” secondary to anti-Communism; in turn, the economic exploitation of prisoners' labor and their body parts was emphasized above all.⁵⁴

Death Camp Sachsenhausen, by then already fourteen years old, largely fit the rhetorical profile of the congealing East German Holocaust historiography and was thus put to use as the introductory film for visits to the site. Reports shortly after the memorial-museum's opening emphasized the role of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*, noting that “Over 30,000 visitors from the GDR and elsewhere were recorded at the Nationale Mahn-und Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen since its opening on the 23rd of April. Weekly, nearly 3,000 saw the documentary ‘Death Camp Sachsenhausen.’”⁵⁵ Working both to bridge the temporal gap between the present of the 1960s and the concentration camp period, a function complemented and warranted by the rhetorics of spatial authenticity at play in an onsite visit, and to condition and mediate the mode of spectatorship with which visitors would engage the NMG, the film was wrought from its original juridical-evidentiary status and transposed to a new form of state-sanctioned

testimony for an officially approved historiographic narrative, leaving the problem of its archival status repressed.

The film's function as introductory film at the NMG exceeded both ordinary pedagogical mechanics in the context of group, class, or individual visits and the limited use of the film in survivor-led educational tours, supported by the NMG, that took place across the Iron Curtain.⁵⁶ Newspaper accounts of visits to the NMG that make mention of the film describe it being deployed not as part of an academic history curriculum, but in preparation for the *Jugendweihe*, a highly ideologically inflected secular coming-of-age ceremony in the GDR intended to replace Christian confirmation.⁵⁷ These onsite *Jugendweihe* trips to Sachsenhausen, which often included meeting a concentration camp survivor, functioned to ritually integrate the children into the antifascist "founding myth" of the GDR, rooted in the martyr complex of antifascist persecution and liberation, allowing the individual citizen to inhabit the role of persecuted antifascist. That these sacraments of socialism⁵⁸ took place onsite and accompanied by survivors already capitalizes on two continuities with history—space and person—to connect the new citizen to the scene of antifascist martyrdom. *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*, then, first performs more than just the banal work of informational exposition and orientation for the camp visit: the moving image of the camp in a (more) original state, shortly after liberation, is captured on film and its temporality relayed via projector to the adolescent, forging an auratic presence between the past antifascist resistance and the present time of the *Jugendweihe*. In a sense, though the emergence of an archive *effect* between the deceitfully appropriated concentration camp footage of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* was inhibited by the context of the NMG, an archive *affect*, as Baron terms it, was active, as *Jugendweihe* viewers experienced the metonymic "transfer of presence"⁵⁹ and historic immediacy that accompanied the limited permissible recognition of the film's archival status.

Despite the film's alignment with official narratives and its espoused pathetic power, growing discontent with the quality and content of the film appear in internal documents at the museum, beginning only ten years after the museum's opening.⁶⁰ In response to this discontent, a new introductory film was made, the 1971 film *Sachsenhausen* (dir. Wolfgang Stemmler). Among other archival and newly recorded material, the 1971 *Sachsenhausen* reproduces the gas chamber sequence from *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*, clearly soliciting an archive effect, not least through the visual distinction between the vivid ORWOcolor of the 1971 film's "present" and the black-and-white "past" of the *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* footage. Though documentation exists of limited circulation in theaters⁶¹ and on television,⁶² the 1971 film never saw regular use at the museum, and *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* continued to be shown.⁶³

Indeed, records of sketches from 1986 for a new introductory film by workers at the NMG, perhaps in response to the historiographic turn toward a more internationalized Holocaust historiography in the mid–late 80s in the GDR,⁶⁴ indicate that *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* was, despite considerable conflict, never retired.⁶⁵ The museum’s subsequent letter to the Ministry of Culture elucidates both the internal critique of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* and its persistent archival value; the film is criticized for not outlining “how [Sakowski] was made into a tool of the SS,” for its failure to discuss prisoners’ solidarity and resistance, and for failing to “clarif[y] how prisoners were brutally exploited by monopoly,”⁶⁶ deficiencies that deviated from the emphases and narratives of late East German Holocaust historiography. Nevertheless, the letter ends with an endorsement of the film’s value as archival material, upholding its historic status and suggesting it, fittingly, be turned into archival material for a new film: “It is therefore suggested that the film ‘Death Camp Sachsenhausen’ be archived for later, appropriate evaluation (Excerpts could be used in a potential new film).”⁶⁷

During the strange interregnum between the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and legal reunification at the end of 1990, an internal planning document from the NMG Sachsenhausen once again unsuccessfully called for the film’s retirement and the creation of a new film, a high priority among its list of urgent liberalizing changes to the memorial site—all of which were, nevertheless, framed as being “indebted to the antifascist tradition.”⁶⁸ Despite these strong recommendations, new prints of the film were ordered at the end of 1990,⁶⁹ and the film continued to be shown at least until its last documented screening to a general audience in 2006.⁷⁰ But the era of reunification would see serious shifts in *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*’s reception as the film become embroiled in nation-building historiographic discourses.

NATIONALE AUFGABE: DEATH CAMP SACHSENHAUSEN AND GERMAN REUNIFICATION

In parallel with the political and economic dimensions of the development of a new, unified German state after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a “struggle over symbols”⁷¹ was incited. The question of what was to be done with the monuments and memory culture of East Germany played a significant role in this struggle, which played out with particular force and gravity at the three concentration camp memorials in the former East: Buchenwald, Ravensbrück, and Sachsenhausen were paradigmatic of the didactic, socialists-first, resistance-focused form of antifascist memory that legitimized the existence of the now-collapsed East German regime while repressing Jewish suffering in the Holocaust. Parallel to the struggle over East German memorial forms at the camps, the early 90s also saw the discovery of mass graves dating to the time of Buchenwald and

Sachsenhausen's use as Soviet Special Camps and the fervent emergence of discourse about the Soviet Union reusing concentration camp sites for political prisoners in the early postwar years; this discourse "fit[] in only too well with the reemerging master narrative of the structural affinities between National Socialism and Stalinism."⁷² *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* became a metonymically invested object of the reckoning with the legacy of the East, entangled in the conflicts around the deficiencies of East Germany's antifascist memory culture and the controversies over the Soviet Special camps; the course of the 1990s would see the first public discourse on the film's authenticity, which enabled the emergence of an archive effect alongside a subsequent reevaluation of the film's evidentiary status.

In the period immediately following reunification, the concentration camp sites were organizationally upended; catalyzed by the aforementioned 1990 discovery of mass graves from the Soviet Special Camps in Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen, directors of the sites were dismissed and replaced with West German historians, the newly founded federal states of Brandenburg and Thuringia in the former East organized commissions to investigate the memorial sites and suggest changes, and provisional changes to critically mediate the Communist memorials through explanatory text were immediately implemented.⁷³ In this context, Gerhard Emig, the newly appointed director of the newly founded Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen (the successor institution to the NMG Sachsenhausen), unilaterally made the decision to stop showing the film onsite in December of 1991,⁷⁴ which led to a short but intense public debate over the film's use at the concentration camp site in the *Berliner Zeitung*, a major daily newspaper in Berlin.

Shortly after Emig decommissioned the film, the West Berlin historian Professor Fritz Vilmar visited the Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen with a group of Israeli visitors, presumably expecting to be shown *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*, but found on arrival that the museum's projectionist had called out sick.⁷⁵ Upon asking after the film, Vilmar learned of Emig's decision. Vilmar is quoted describing the matter as "scandal of the highest degree"⁷⁶ in an op-ed on the film's retirement in the *Berliner Zeitung* by reporter Susanne Lenz that ran on January 13, 1992. Outlining the story of the film's retirement and defending its historical, emotional, and pedagogical value against site director Gerhard Emig's critique of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* as "too one-sided" and "portray[ing] the Red Army as the liberator of all of Germany,"⁷⁷ Lenz emphasized *Death Camp Sachsenhausen's* affective power and great pathos, citing both images from the filmed interview with Sakowski, including the gas-chamber and "doctor's office" scene, and the footage of mountains of shoes, clothes, teeth, and ashes largely drawn from *Majdanek* and *Auschwitz*.⁷⁸

Perhaps in response to perceived public outcry to the article, perhaps as the result of an internal bureaucratic dispute over Emig's unilateral decision, perhaps simply to compensate for the bad publicity from the article, a short follow-up in the January 14 edition of the *Berliner Zeitung* announced that *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* had been reinstituted at the Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen the very day after Lenz's article was printed.⁷⁹ Uwe Koch, the state of Brandenburg's Director of the Commission for Museums and Memorials (and thus the authority with whom Emig should have consulted before retiring the film), provided a hedged defense of the film for the announcement, focused on its authenticity and historical value: reflecting the fetish for archival footage on one hand and the practical lack of usable audiovisual material from Sachsenhausen on the other, he notes that the film "has some weaknesses in terms of historical accuracy and authenticity. Audiences should be made aware of these [weaknesses,] but on the other hand, the film includes valuable documentary material. . . . As long as nothing else is available, we will continue to show it."⁸⁰

Word of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*'s retirement reached the film historian and minor DEFA director Dr. Günther Jordan, who wrote a scathing letter to Uwe Koch in defense of the film on January 16th. Jordan's letter defends the continued circulation and integrity of the film by framing the project as an authentic, independent, and personal reckoning with the Nazi past by Richard Brandt and the film's writer Karl Schnog, a project "which emerged from their innermost, own mandate"⁸¹ rather than from the commission of Soviet authorities. Jordan denies the categorization of the film as "mere propaganda"⁸² and urges Koch to view the film as an "important document of German film history." Moreover, Jordan asserts that the film witnesses "not only the crimes of the Nazi regime, but also the will and the difficulties of its contemporaries to deal with it"⁸³—in other words, by virtue of its authorship, it maintains an intimate relation to antifascist resistance itself.

The cultural policy spokesperson of the Brandenburg contingent of the hardline anti-Communist FDP, Renate Schneider, echoed the emerging evaluation of the film as containing valuable archival material despite its flaws, as she wrote in an article published in the *Berliner Zeitung* on the 15th that decried Emig's decision as "a correction in the wrong direction" and contended that the film contained "important factual information about Sachsenhausen which a visit at the site alone could not give."⁸⁴ She ends her statement by outlining a *correct way* forward with the film, in contrast to her colleague Emig's "correction in the wrong direction": "The right way would be to convincingly present new *Sichtweisen*."⁸⁵ By this she certainly meant new points of view—i.e., as she goes on to describe, the creation of a new film with an alternative (ideological and discursive) perspective, as had been called for since the 70s. But, tarrying with the

ambiguity of this word, we might interpret *Sichtweisen* as “ways of seeing”—and, indeed, the young post-reunification museum attempted on multiple occasions to forge a new way of viewing the film, proscribing the viewer’s relation to the film extratextually.

Just as, after reunification, a sign was erected at the gate to the concentration camp site describing the geopolitically charged conditions of the NMG Sachsenhausen’s creation in order to mediate visitors’ experiences, a small information panel was hung next to the screen at the museum’s cinema in 1993, describing the conditions of its creation in a piecemeal measure to hedge its incompatibility with contemporary ideology and memorial culture.⁸⁶ This move roughly coincided with the Sachsenhausen site’s second post-reunification director, Günter Morsch, describing Sachsenhausen as “the worst-researched concentration camp in Europe” in the Berlin-based *Tageszeitung*⁸⁷ and followed considerable new attention being cast on reform at the Sachsenhausen memorial following the inauguration of the German parliament’s first Investigative Commission for Working Through the History and Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in 1992 and a neo-Nazi arson attack on the camp’s reconstructed Jewish barracks in September of the same year.⁸⁸ The text of the 1993 panel is lost, but a later attempt to textually mediate the excesses of the film survives: the 1996 letter quoted at the beginning of this article. Though the film possessed many shortcomings, which were particularly indigestible in the anticommunist political climate of the mid-90s in the former East Germany, and the method of viewing had to be highly mediated, faith in archival film’s unique metonymic “transfer of presence”⁸⁹ prevailed, and *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*’s “predominantly authentic material” rendered it “indispensable.”⁹⁰ But critical understanding of the film’s authenticity would change drastically on the brink of the millennium, sounding the death knell for the film’s witness-function, the rise of a parallel, inverted understanding of the film’s evidentiary status, and the solicitation of an archive effect where one had once been repressed.

In December of 1999, the Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, in cooperation with the Stiftung Brandenburger Gedenkstätte and other major public history museums around Berlin, held the conference “Introductory Films in Concentration Camp Memorials and their Use in Memorial Education, with Special Consideration of the Film *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* at the Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen.”⁹¹ At this conference, museum professionals, film scholars, and governmental officials alike reckoned with the status of the film in the wake of nine years of considering the new demands and discourses of memory and authenticity effected by German reunification.⁹² Workers from the Sachsenhausen memorial testified that “the ‘spectrum of reactions’ to *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* ranged “from explicit praise or the determined wish to see

the film at all costs during a group tour, to verbal complaints to memorial site staff or indignant letters to the memorial site management.”⁹³ The spectrum of reactions to the film among those present at the conference, however, was less divided. With few exceptions, all of which were grounded in the value of the film’s archival material, the overwhelming opinion, even from those who had worked at the camp memorial and museum before reunification, was strongly against the continued use of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*.

This emerging consensus against the film can be, in part, attributed to the disclosure of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*’s archival provenance: at the conference, Günter Agde emphasized his discoveries that the film depicted prisoners at Sachsenhausen’s NKVD Special Camp #7 and that it made use of material from Majdanek and Auschwitz, as he had first publicized in writing in 1994.⁹⁴ The film becoming embroiled in the carceral excesses of the Soviet Special Camp system, which remained a hot topic throughout the 1990s as it “assume[d] a synecdochical relationship for many to their own suffering under the East German dictatorship,”⁹⁵ weakened its claim to being comprised of invaluable, “predominantly authentic” material, rendering it inadmissibly compromised for contemporary audiences.

The sudden possibility of perceiving temporal and intentional disparities between footage once inhibited from being perceived as disparate, now legible as a collage of material which did not so much enable the fantasy of historical transparency in memorializing the Holocaust as foreground the duplicitous collaging of spatially and temporally distinct footage equally suited to function as witness to Soviet malfeasance as to function as witness to the Nazi concentration camp system, radically renegotiated the status of this troubled film. In short, Agde had managed to solicit an archive effect for the viewer of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* where it had been repressed for some fifty years—and changed the film’s meaning in doing so. Jaimie Baron’s idea that “the recognition of a document as archival . . . is a function of the relationship between *different elements of the same text*, between a document placed within a new textual context, and not of the relationship between a text and the extratextual context in which it is shown,”⁹⁶ is thus wrinkled by the case of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*: the many distinct extratextual contexts in which it was shown renegotiated the relationship between elements of the same text for its many historic viewers, first eliding and, finally, foregrounding the status of their difference.

CODA

Beside *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*’s hidden testimony of the Soviet Special Camp period, the film holds another secret that remains unaddressed both in scholarship on *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* and in broader literature on

Holocaust film. Günter Jordan has contested that Brandt's *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* was "the first and, for a long time, only German film about persecution and extermination in the Nazi period,"⁹⁷ a claim in which the word German is operative: whereas films like *Death Mills* (1945, dir. Billy Wilder) were produced by the Western Allies for German audiences, the production work for *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* was done almost entirely by German Communists, not Soviet filmmakers working on their behalf. Yet *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* lays claim to another, more consequential "first": despite its total lack of reference to Jewish victimhood in the Holocaust and its nefarious instrumentalization of Jewishness in its reception, *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* is the first film about systematic murder and the horrors of the Nazi concentration camp system to be written by a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust.⁹⁸

That this fact has been overlooked until now is perhaps unsurprising, for Jews in East Germany by and large "denied their Jewishness" in a society that "repressed difference of all kinds,"⁹⁹ was reluctant to acknowledge its responsibility for the Holocaust until shortly before its demise, and expected religion, much like the state in the Marxist tradition, to wither away. Nevertheless, Karl Schnog, who wrote *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*, was born in 1897 in Cologne to a Jewish mother and father and worked as an actor until 1933, likely meeting Richard Brandt at Erwin Piscator's Freie Bühne theater in 1920s Berlin. Following the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, Schnog fled to Switzerland, France, and Luxembourg, where he stayed until the German invasion of 1940.¹⁰⁰ Schnog was then deported into the camp system, spending 1940–45 in Dachau, Sachsenhausen, and Buchenwald;¹⁰¹ after initially returning to Luxembourg, he promptly moved to the Soviet Occupation Zone and became involved in cultural and political life, beginning with *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*: a project drawing on Nazi sources, undergone with a former Nazi propagandist, produced in part to send fellow Sachsenhausen inmate Paul Sakowski to a life sentence in Siberia. Even should, as its many critics have hoped for, "better" material become available, *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*, a fraught film full of contradiction and controversy, will remain a crucial document of its moment—and, I hope, of ours.

Notes

1. Letter from Dr. Günter Morsch to visitors at the Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, August 22, 1996, Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, ZSG 1/105.
2. *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* existed in two versions, one of which is lost, and contradictory evidence exists both as to the identity of the extant version and to which version was shown at its courtroom premiere. The Soviet-backed paper *Neues Deutschland's* report on the film's courtroom premiere describes a scene in which SS camp guards are rewarded with a vacation to Italy. See "Geständnisse Grauensvoller Verbrechen," *Neues Deutschland*, October 25, 1947, 1. This scene is not to be seen in

any extant version of the film, and no reference has been made to it elsewhere. An early script for the first version of the film does describe such a scene in Bundesarchiv, *Todeslager Sachsenhausen*, Produktionsakte, BA DR 118/2023, which was removed from the film script in an October 1, 1946 draft despite reappearing in some 1947 versions. However, the script approved by the Soviet censor Major Chernyschov, and all script versions dated after the first designation of a 'second draft,' do not include it. Whether this testifies to a failure or misrepresentation on the part of the *Neues Deutschland* or the possibility of the first edition of the film, in fact, being shown at the trial, is not able to be corroborated.

3. See the to-do list of shots to be found in Bundesarchiv, *Todeslager Sachsenhausen*, Produktionsakte, BA DR 118/2023.
4. For the use of *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympic City Berlin*, see Agde, "Falls zusätzliche Aufnahmen gewünscht werden . . ."—medienstrategische und filmhistorische Aspekte zwei früher Sachsenhausen-Filme—, in *Inszenierungen des Rechts: Schauprozesse, Medienprozesse und Prozessfilme in der DDR* (Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2006), 122.
5. Jaimie Baron, *The Archive Effect: Found Footage and the Audiovisual Experience of History* (Routledge, 2014), 18, 22.
6. See Todeslager Sachsenhausen, Produktionsakte, BA DR 118/2023, especially transcript of "Text zu den 350 Meter neuer Aufnahmen von 7.1.1947."
7. Agde, "Falls," 124.
8. Agde also believes NKVD prisoners to be visible in the gate-opening liberation sequence and in the panning shot from Guard Tower A, which remains, unattributed and without remark on the presence of Soviet political prisoners, on display at the Museum and Memorial Sachsenhausen today. See Günter Agde, "Lager Sachsenhausen in Film," in *Sachsenhausen bei Berlin: Speziallager Nr. 7, 1945–195: Kassiber, Dokumente, Studien* (Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1944), 254–58.
9. Agde, "Falls," 126, my translation.
10. Günter Jordan and Ralf Schenk, *Schwarzweiss und Farbe* (Filmmuseum Potsdam & Jovis, 1996), 389.
11. Personalfragebogen, Magistrat der Stadt Berlin/Deutsche Zentralverwaltung für Volksbildung in der Sowjetischen Besatzungszone Brandt, Richard, Bundesarchiv DR/117/18198.
12. See Ibid.; and Christiane Mückenberger and Günter Jordan, *Sie sehen selbst, Sie hören selbst—eine Geschichte der DEFA von ihren Anfängen bis 1949* (Hitzeroth, 1994), 202.
13. Letter from DEFA to the *Sowjetische Militärkommandatur der Stadt Berlin*, in Todeslager Sachsenhausen, Produktionsakte, BA DR 118/2023.
14. For the title change, see letter from DEFA Hauptbuchhaltung to Brandt-Produktion, 25 February 1947, in Todeslager Sachsenhausen, Produktionsakte, BA DR 118/2023. For the length in meters, see the letter DEFA to the Sowjetische Militärkommandatur der Stadt Berlin, Todeslager Sachsenhausen, Produktionsakte, BA DR 118/2023. The (currently available) final version of the film would be closer to 1,100 meters.
15. Censor correspondence between Brandt and Chernyschov reveal extremely limited editorial changes between versions. See DEFA to the Sowjetische Militärkommandatur der Stadt Berlin.
16. "Der Sachsenhausen-Prozeß," *Neue Zeit*, October 25, 1947, 2, my translation.
17. "Das Grauen von Sachsenhausen," *Berliner Zeitung*, October 25, 1947, 2, my translation.
18. For the lack of Anglo-American precedent, see Lawrence Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment: Making Law and History in the Trials of Holocaust* (Yale University Press, 2001), 23. For the lack of Soviet

- precedent, see “Que faire des images soviétiques de la Shoah ?” 1985. *Revue de l'association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma*, no. 76 (June 1, 2015): 23.
19. Charter of the International Military Tribunal, sec. V, art. 19, quoted in Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment*, 30.
 20. Douglas, *The Memory of Judgment*, 29.
 21. Natascha Drubek-Meyer, *Filme über Vernichtung und Befreiung: Die Rhetorik der Filmdokumente Aus Majdanek 1944–1945* (Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH, 2020), 51.
 22. *Ibid.*, 23.
 23. For the use of material from the Majdanek film in the first Soviet Nuremberg film, see Drubek-Meyer, *Filme über Vernichtung und Befreiung*, 50.
 24. Drubek-Meyer, *Filme über Vernichtung und Befreiung*, 129.
 25. *Ibid.*
 26. This trial followed shortly after tense legal controversy about whether the standard legal statute of limitations on murder applied to the perpetrators of the Holocaust.
 27. “Sie Sahen Ihre Schuld Auf Der Leinwand,” *Bild-Zeitung*, October 12, 1958, 6.
 28. Agde, “Falls,” 137, my translation.
 29. “Sie Sahen Ihre Schuld,” 6.
 30. Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 59.
 31. Some literature asserts that it was shown as an introductory reel in the Soviet Occupation Zone through 1949, but I have not been able to find corroborating evidence for this claim in databases of film screenings in the GDR (nor cinema listings in newspapers.) For this claim, see Agde, “Lager Sachsenhausen in Film,” 253.
 32. VEB DEFA Studio für Dokumentarfilme, Bundesarchiv Berlin, DR 118. Nr. 2019, letter from 10/22/1956, cited in Günter Agde, “Bilder von Schuldigen: Das Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen Im Film,” *FilmDokument* 80 (January 27, 2006): 29. Such a restriction aligns with the DEFA leadership’s 1949 dissolution of the national documentary production unit, which Richard Brandt, the director of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*, ran, a dissolution that was accompanied by a description of East German documentary film production up until that point as “*ungenügend und schlecht*” (insufficient and bad). See Jordan and Schenk, *Schwarzweiss*, 46.
 33. Moreover, some claim that the film was released by GDR authorities as a Soviet film in 1955, a claim that I have been unable to substantiate. See Petra Haustein, *Geschichte im Dissens: die Auseinandersetzungen um die Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen nach dem Ende der DDR* (Leipziger Univ.-Verl, 2006), 204.
 34. “Eine Kundgebung Gegen Judenmörder,” *Neues Deutschland*, March 9, 1956, 1; “Kundgebung Gegen Bonner Judenmörder,” *Neues Deutschland*, March 8, 1956, 6; “Kundgebung Gegen Judenmörder Und Kriegsverbrecher in Der Bonner Regierung,” *Neue Zeit*, March 8, 1956, 1.
 35. Some accounts frame the event as having been organized specifically in response to an attack on a Düsseldorf synagogue in 1956; see “Nie Wieder ‘Beamte Des Todes’: Über 1200 Berliner Auf Der Großkundgebung Gegen Bonner Refaschisierung,” *Neue Zeit*, March 6, 1956, 1.
 36. “Kundgebung Gegen Judenmörder,” 1.
 37. “Nie Wieder,” 1.

38. Endlich, *Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2002), 204.
39. Klaus Neumann, *Shifting Memories: The Nazi Past in the New Germany*. Nachdr. Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany (University of Michigan Press, 2003), 119. This instrumentalization was even more apparent in the second screening of *Todeslager Sachsenhausen* in 1956, which took place during an "Ost-West-Verständigungsgespräch" at the *Haus der Presse* in East Berlin. See "Kurz Informiert," *Neue Zeit*, October 27, 1956, 6.
40. "Oberhausen Zeigt Dokfilme Der DEFA," *Neues Deutschland*, April 24, 1996, 9.
41. "Berliner Kinos Vom 5. Bis 11. Juni," *Neues Deutschland*, May 6, 1997, 21.
42. These include a 2005 screening at the Filmmuseum Potsdam as part of its series Filmdokument; 2007, 2015, and 2025 screenings at the *Deutsches Historisches Museum's* Zeughauskino; a 2015 screening at the Goethe-Institut in London; a 2019 screening at the DocLisboa festival; and a screening I arranged at the University of Chicago in October 2023. See, respectively, "Berliner Kinos Vom 26. Jan. Bis 1. Febr.," *Neues Deutschland*, January 26, 2006, 19; "Berliner Kinos Vom 7. Bis 13. Juni," *Neues Deutschland*, July 6, 2007, 19; "Frühe Aufnahmen von den befreiten Lagern," <https://www.dhm.de/zeughauskino/vorfuehrung/fruehe-aufnahmen-von-den-befreiten-lagern-1181>; "Veranstaltung: Filmvorführung: Todeslager Sachsenhausen," <https://www.sachsenhausen-sbg.de/veranstaltungen/filmvorfuehrung-todeslager-sachsenhausen>; "Documenting Nazi Atrocities—Early Films on the Liberation of the Camps | European Literature Network," <https://www.eurolitnetwork.com/documenting-nazi-atrocities-early-films-on-the-liberation-of-the-camps/>; "Rise and Fall of the Wall—The Cinema of East Germany Retrospective," <https://www.doclisboa.org/2019/en/current-edition/sections/rise-and-fall-of-the-wall-the-cinema-of-east-germany-retrospective/>; "Death Camp Sachsenhausen with Danny Pinto," <https://filmstudiescenter.uchicago.edu/event/death-camp-sachsenhausen>.
43. Agde, "Falls." An additional Soviet newsreel on the Sachsenhausen trial, one reel of which is accessible via the Russian film archive Net-Film under the title "Суд над фашистскими военными преступниками," makes use of footage of Sakowski, but its provenance is unclear from the archive's records—it is likely a lost reel of *Berlin Trial* that did not make it into the German Federal Archive's digitization.
44. Mückenberger and Jordan, *Sie sehen selbst*, 300.
45. Günter Morsch, *Mord und Massenmord im Konzentrationslager Sachsenhausen 1936–1945*, Schriftenreihe der Stiftung Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten, Bd. 13 (Metropol, 2005), 45.
46. The other, the 2013 TV movie *George* (dir. Joachim A. Lang), depicts inmates at the NKVD at the notorious Hohenschönhausen prison being forced to watch *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* on a makeshift screen before being transferred to the NKVD Camp No. 7. The sequence of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen* excerpted in *George* is one of the unattributed *Auschwitz* scenes.
47. Gitta Nickel's 1977 documentary on Konrad Wolf, the aptly titled *Konrad Wolf*, reproduces this excerpt from *I Was Nineteen*, replacing the footage of Gregor with footage of Soviet children and elders recorded during shooting for *Mama, ich lebe* (1976, dir. Konrad Wolf).
48. Anne Barnert, *Die Antifaschismus-Thematik Der DEFA* (Schüren, 2008), 198.
49. "Helden—Menschen wie wir. Zur Aufnahme des DEFA-Films 'Ich war neunzehn' durch Jugendliche," *Neues Deutschland*, April 21, 1968, 4. The film's cinematographer, Werner Bergmann, recalls a humorous exchange with Wolf over the film's stock: "Before work began, Bergmann had just filmed DEFA's 70mm experimental film [DEFA 70, 1967, dir. Werner Bergmann,] so: widescreen format, color. He developed his ideas for 'I was Nineteen' in Cinemascope. Konrad Wolf said to him: 'No, that won't work with this material.' Bergmann ironically countered: 'Well, maybe we'll shoot it on

- black-and-white 16mm.' 'Yes,' responded Konrad Wolf blithely." "Ein Film von Format in Normal-format," *Tribüne* (Berlin), January 26, 1968, my translation.
50. Barnert, *Antifaschismus-Thematik*, 206. A report from the *Institut für Filmwissenschaft Berlin* details the high occurrence of this phenomenon among youth, attributing it to the "overworked imagination" of contemporary youth. See Archiv der Akademie der Künste, Wolf-Konrad, 145.
 51. Thomas Elsaesser and Michael Wedel. "Defining DEFA's Historical Imaginary: The Films of Konrad Wolf." *New German Critique*, no. 82 (2001): 19–20.
 52. Agde, "Falls," 123n6.
 53. Thomas C. Fox, *Stated Memory: East Germany and the Holocaust*, Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Camden House, 1999), 23.
 54. Fox, *Stated Memory*, 23. Fox details the camp museum's close adherence to the East German historian Heinz Kühnrich's historiography of the Holocaust, which became the dominant framework for presenting the Holocaust in East Germany; at the Sachsenhausen memorial, for example, "a Kühnrich chart. . . demonstrating the profitability of an individual slave laborer was reproduced and prominently exhibited." In response to pressure from Israel, Sachsenhausen became, paradoxically, the only memorial site in the GDR to contain a Jewish exhibition in two reconstructed camp barracks, which were nevertheless widely inflected by East German "officialese" and widely criticized by international guests. See Fox, *Stated Memory*, 22–24, 53–63.
 55. "30 000 Besuchten Sachsenhausen," *Berliner Zeitung*, May 28, 1961, 2. In keeping with the site's internationally facing status, the film was also shown to foreign visitors and delegations from across the Iron Curtain. See "Westberliner Kulturschaffende Besuchten Sachsenhausen," *Neues Deutschland*, April 30, 1961, 2; "Mali-Delegation in Sachsenhausen," *Neues Deutschland*, June 8, 1962, 2; "Antifaschisten Geehrt," *Neues Deutschland*, June 23, 1964; "Wir Sind Immer Bereit, Einander Zu Helfen': Sowjetbürger Über Ihre Begegnungen Mit Der DDR," *Berliner Zeitung*, September 23, 1974, 2; "Helden Des Widerstandes Leben in Taten Der Jugend," *Neues Deutschland*, September 11, 1975; "Bonjour, Berlin! Junge Franzosen in Der Hauptstadt Zu Gast," January 29, 1976, 8; and "Antifaschistische Kämpfer Geehrt: Französische Lehrer Am Mahnmal in Sachsenhausen," *Neues Deutschland*, April 9, 1984, 2. To this end, new prints dubbed in Russian and French were struck in 1963 and 1965–66; by 1982, these versions had been viewed by 24,000 and 3,500 viewers, respectively. See Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, NMG 26/2.
 56. The first such tour took place in 1961, shortly after the Eichmann trial, when Max Metzler and the West German communist Harry Naujoks, both survivors of Sachsenhausen, arranged screenings in the West German cities of Hannover and Hamburg Eichmann trial, and consisted of screenings of *Death Camp Sachsenhausen*, which were introduced by Harry Naujoks and followed by public discussion. Naujoks led a more extensive tour in 1967–68, bringing the film to numerous West German cities, as well as to Denmark and the Netherlands, as part of a touring exhibition on Sachsenhausen provocatively titled "Cain—Where Is Your Brother?" See Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, NL 6/18/Metzler (NL 6/18/1/23–35). Within the GDR, records only exist of one such survivor-led tour, led by Walter Förster of Radeberg near Dresden between September of 1967 and February of 1968. See Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, P 3 Förster, Walter/1.
 57. Multiple newspaper accounts document this practice in the 70s and 80s. See "Eine Unvergeßliche Jugendstunde," *Neues Deutschland*, March 16, 1979, "Erste Jugendstunde Mit Paten Der NVA," *Neues Deutschland*, October 27, 1979, and "Vor Der Jugendweihe - FDJ-Mitglieder Führen Nach Sachsenhausen," *Berliner Zeitung*, April 13, 1982.
 58. For a more detailed account of the religious valences and functions of the East German concentration camp memorials as "churches of socialism," including the central Sachsenhausen memorial sculpture's "altar," see Fox, *Stated Memory*, 40.

59. Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 123–24.
60. See Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, KAW K14 M2, KAW K8 M4, NMG 26/2.
61. "Sachsenhausenfilm Aufgeführt," *Neues Deutschland*, November 26, 1971, 4; "Einladung zur Aktivtagung der Lagerarbeitgemeinschaft Sachsenhausen, inklus. Uraufführung des Filmes 'Sachsenhausen' um 1800 Uhr in der Kongreß-Halle an der 21.11.197," Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, KAW K10 M4.
62. "Fernsehprogramm," *Berliner Zeitung*, August 30, 1972, 10.
63. A document from 1983 reviewing the filmic material available to the NMG management describes the 1971 film as having been "hardly ever shown to the public at the NMG Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen," perhaps to some degree because, as it describes, the print struck for the museum had serious sound-sync issues. Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, KAW K14 M2.
64. Neumann, *Shifting Memories*, 120.
65. See Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, NMG 63/5 7.
66. Letter from Fritz Reuter to Siegfried Wagner, Ministry of Culture, March 3, 1983, Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, KAW K14 M2, my translation.
67. *Ibid.*
68. Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, NMG 63/5 7.
69. Letter from Ulrich Radke to J. Hirthammer, 23.11.90, KAW K8 M4, Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, p. 3.
70. "Ostseeschüler besuchten KZ-Gedenkstätte," *Ostsee-Zeitung*, June 19, 2006, 15.
71. Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870–1990* (University of California Press, 2000), 3, cited in Anna Saunders, *Memorializing the GDR: Monuments and Memory after 1989* (Berghahn Books, 2018), 3.
72. Neumann, *Shifting Memories*, 190.
73. Saunders, *Memorializing the GDR*, 118, Neumann, *Shifting Memories*, 215, Fox, *Stated Memory*, 61, 63.
74. The film was not the only thing that suffered under Emig's tenure: the number of employees working at the Sachsenhausen site halved, and the conditions of the grounds and museum worsened to the extent that Fritz Vilmar penned a letter on behalf of the university's history department to the government of Brandenburg decrying the "'untenable conditions' in the most important concentration camp site in the area around Berlin." See Susanne Lenz, "Emig Ist Der Todeslager-Film 'Zu Einseitig,'" *Berliner Zeitung*, January 13, 1992.
75. Lenz, "Emig," 16.
76. "Ein Skandal ersten Ranges." Lenz, "Emig," 16, my translation.
77. Lenz, "Emig," 16, my translation.
78. Agde, "Lager Sachsenhausen in Film," Hausteint, *Dissens*, 203.
79. "Sachsenhausen-Film Für Interessierte Wieder Zu Sehen," *Berliner Zeitung*, January 14, 1992, 22.
80. "Sachsenhausen-Film," 22.
81. Letter from Dr. Günter Jordan to Uwe Koch, 16.1.1992, Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, my translation.
82. *Ibid.*

83. Ibid.
84. "FDP: Film Bietet Fakten Über Sachsenhausen," *Berliner Zeitung*, January 15, 1992, my translation.
85. "FDP."
86. Haustein, *Dissens*, 204n431.
87. Anita Kugler, "Modell des Schreckens für das Europa der Nazis," *Die Tageszeitung: taz*, June 26, 1993, <https://taz.de/!1611033>, cited in Fox, *Stated Memory*, 48, my translation.
88. See Neumann, *Shifting Memories*, 135, and Saunders, *Memorializing the GDR*, 11.
89. Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 124.
90. Letter from Dr. Günter Morsch to visitors at the Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, August 22, 1996, Archiv Gedenkstätte Sachsenhausen, ZSG 1/105.
91. Haustein, *Geschichte im Dissens*.
92. An additional parliamentary investigative commission that ran from 1995 to 1998, this time on "Overcoming the Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in the Process of German Unification," yielded the new Federal Foundation for the Study of the Communist Dictatorship in Germany, and the historiographic issue of comparing Stalinism (and Communist repression more broadly) to Nazism had been provisionally settled with the "Faulenbach Formula," which recommended that, in Anna Saunders's summary, "while Nazi crimes should not be relativized, neither should communist crimes be trivialized." Saunders, *Memorializing the GDR*, 116.
93. Haustein, *Dissens*, 202, my translation.
94. See Günter Agde, "Lager Sachsenhausen in Film," in *Sachsenhausen Bei Berlin: Speziallager Nr. 7, 1945–195: Kassiber, Dokumente, Studien*, 1. Aufl., 252–61. AtV Dokument Und Essay (Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1994).
95. Fox, *Stated Memory*, 65.
96. Baron, *The Archive Effect*, 22.
97. Jordan, *Schwarzweiss*, 21, my translation.
98. Mückenberger and Jordan, *Sie sehen selbst*, 245–46.
99. Fox, *Stated Memory*, 2–3.
100. Heuer, *Lexikon*, 98.
101. Ibid.

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