

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The youth of today have to know the details of what happened during the period of history known as the holocaust. Witnesses are dying out at this very moment, taking the evidence and the truth with them. It is one of the more recent times in history, when man has revealed himself and dropped the mask of mankind. The darker side of human nature has come to light with disastrous ramifications

“The Institute for Historical Review, a Torrance, California based organisation of revisionists and pseudohistorians claimed the Nazi Holocaust is nothing but a hoax, a Zionist plot”. It was Mel Mermelstein, a survivor of the Concentration Camps who, in 1981, filed a lawsuit for 17 million and 50 thousand dollars against them.

Even now the darker side of our society is trying to claim that our monstrous history is untrue and for what ends? So that they may come to power again?

It is important that we know the truth and like Mr Mermelstein, we stop these people before they take hold of our lives once more.

During the Nazi reign over Germany, Joseph Goebbels was the man in charge of the ‘Ministry of Propaganda and Enlightenment’. It was to him that all forms of film media were answerable. Did he force animators to work against the Jews? Was it he who manipulated Germany’s directors and animators to promote the ‘Final Solution’, which would eliminate 60% of the Jewish community whilst the rest were forced into slave labour?

When the animator Hans Fischerkoesen met Goebbels, many have suggested that he embraced the new direction in German animation. Yet I believe that like other artists he protested at working on irrational and genocidal ideas, even though to do so was exceedingly dangerous. It seems fairly obvious from my research that Fischerkoesen was no Nazi. Yet the Russian authorities did not at first share this view. He was arrested at the end of the war in Germany, for being a possible Nazi collaborator and spent three years in the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. There he graffitied the walls with caricatures of Nazis, Communists, presenting them as vegetables. They marched around, ordering each other about and leading each other to the chopping board.

“Is it not absurd that parsnips should be in control of carrots, when they are clearly related?”<sup>1</sup>

It has become all too commonplace in this post war period for Germans to deny any affiliation with the nazi party during the war. Innocence and guilt are hard to prove and more than one of the party’s henchmen in animation must surely have been adopted by the Allies.

Why has it become so difficult to access animated German films made between 1933-45? Have they secreted away in some mad conspiratorial archive or have they been destroyed? If so, who destroyed them, rampaging Russian soldiers, the animators themselves or perhaps even the government that was to follow the Nazis, out of shame for the past?

I do not believe that if they still exist, they should be withheld from the public by a parental state. Instead we should be able to see all the mistakes of our forbears so that we may better learn from them. Hardcore Pornography is readily available in Germany yet our animation has disappeared.

It is symptomatic of animated short-film that although animators are responsible for their films they are mostly not named. In many cases only the producers take the credit. Therefore the research into propaganda film in animation turns out to be a difficult subject. For example the case of Peter Sachs, whose films could only be found with the help of a detailed filmography. Once responsibility for the animation had been cleared, the problem of a missing copy ground appears, for well-maintained propaganda copies are rare.

Maybe it is because, prior to this decade in Germany, propaganda films were seen as not cultured and were therefore rarely kept in archives. In many cases it is difficult to acquire the rights of usage, even for an existing copy. In most cases it remains unclear if the firm for which the propaganda animation was made, or the production-company of the film, holds the censure rights.<sup>2</sup> If ownership of the censure rights is in dispute, the demand of honorarium from the licensee can, in the worst case, be of horrendous

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<sup>1</sup> William Moritz

<sup>2</sup>The Bundes film archive in Berlin will only proceed after the owner of the censure rights had been found and confirmed.

measures, so the film or film clip can not be accessed. Fortunately this is not always the case when acquiring the rights from private lenders.

German propaganda film remains to this day amongst the least exposed pictures of film history. It is surprising how much film produced during this period has been attributed to this genre and how much good animation we the public are missing. Is this a good thing, because surely we as people of the world should learn from past generations mistakes. Are we today, still being subjected to forms of animation that were originally described as propaganda? If so should we worry about the ways in which modern companies and institutions have control over public opinion. For is it right that we let them exploit such media, in the search for greater capitol return?

## **CHAPTER 1: Fischerkoesen's Background and the Savings Bank**

Fischerkoesen first made his mark on the world of animation making advertisements for the German Savings Bank and the Giro Co-operative. At the time he made his films for them they were commercial, public interests, yet later they were to become an integral part of the Nazis plan for funding the war effort. Fischerkoesen had no means of knowing this. Also his first employer Pinschewer, who was later to be dubbed 'Father of Swiss Propaganda', became a major factor in his early work.

Although Pinschewer had been given such an unsavoury title, he was in fact a man who had fled Germany for the relative safety of Switzerland after refusing to sack several of his Jewish employees. It is understandable that men such as these were thought of as collaborators to the cogs of the Nazi machine; yet the truth is often very different.

Fischerkoesen may have realised that he was associating with the hated 'war profiteers', that he despised so openly from experiences in his medical career, yet financial instability had effectively forced his hand. Today one need not worry for ones life, with or without work, however in the 20s in Germany there was such huge upheaval in the financial markets, that talk of abolishing all forms of social security was what effectively ended the Weimar Governments ability to govern as a unified body. The country simply could not afford to pay their social security debts, yet one in three was out of work. Had they completely abolished an already meagre handout to the unemployed millions would have starved. Hence one can well understand Fischerkoesen's decision to take the work that was offered to him, especially as it was not yet fully tied to the state, never mind the still insignificant Nazi movement. One may well look at Fischerkoesen's work and lay part of Germany's collective blame upon him, yet to do this without first examining the facts would be most cruel, to a man who suffered greatly throughout his life. The need to work, despite reservations about ones overall actions is a factor that I'm sure most people, even in today's relative security of living, will be acquainted with.

It was a time of great financial unrest, with massive hyperinflation rocking the very foundations of German society. Work, any work, was valued and cannot be held against a man whose only other alternative was to go hungry. I feel that a background to Fischerkoesen's and Germany's situation is needed to fully appreciate this predicament.

The first “Savings Bank”, as we know it today, was set up in Hamburg in 1778<sup>3</sup> but only after the formation of a roof organisation “Deutscher Sparkassen- und Giroverband” (DSGV; German Savings Bank and Giro Association)<sup>4</sup> in 15. March 1924 were the Savings Banks as we know them today formed. This created the institutional foundation by which the savings banks were to be competition-competent against private banking and confederate credit amenities and enabled them to present a public appearance with a uniform concept.

This measure did in no way disable the de centralised conduct of individual Savings Banks, which continued- formally until 1945 inside a city, a council district or a co-operative that stood under the lands rights statute. The founding of the “German Savings Bank- and Giro co-operative” functioned with a currency-politic constancy. These banks were introduced to the Rent Mark in November 1923, and through to the free- convertible Reich’s Mark currency, that took place after the concept of the “Dawes plan”<sup>5</sup> in 1924.

This plan was to pump American money into Germany to aid in her re-construction and was carried out with growing success until 1928 and the global economic depression heralded by the Wall Street Crash. Never the less, under the conditions for allied reparations introduced after the First World War and the hyperinflation of 1923, a breach of faith in money and security had rapidly developed. This fragile situation caused great difficulty to all money interests, especially savings that were hit hardest of all by the inflation. To counter this decline a newly reformed “Savings Bank roof organisations” first measure, was to decide on the intensity and unity of the Savings Bank advertisement campaign in 24.8.1924. They felt that the crisis in public confidence had to be addressed quickly and with great gusto.

To address this growing crisis, Savings Banks from around Europe met in Milan between 26. -31.10.1924 where the first International Savings Bank congress took place. They were to co-operatively engineer a scheme to strengthen the publics conception of savings. From then on the 31st of October became the annual World Savings Day. Since 1928, every last working day in October, was celebrated in

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<sup>3</sup> Sparkasse (Savings Bank). 21/1933. p.430.

<sup>4</sup> The roof association consisted out of the German Central-Giro association, the German Savings Bank association, as well as the German association of Communal Banks and created the settlement of the in 1920 executed jointment of Saving Banks- and Giro associations.

Germany as the international world savings day. Yet under national socialism it became ‘national savings day’<sup>6</sup> in 1933. The nazis had for all intents and purposes hijacked this day for their own ends, where saving became a national obligation under the nazi regime.

The first Savings Bank advertisement film was made in November 1924. “The penny must bring it” (censure: 13.11.1924, propaganda film GmbH Julius Pinschewer, Animation: Hans Fischerkoesen). A connection between Savings Bank and state that was significant at the time of the Nazis, yet had it’s roots in earlier Weimar Republic politics when Reich’s councillor Luther declared: “Today’s youth have to be made responsible for the savings. It is the responsibility of the parents, schools and the church to educate them in that manner.”<sup>7</sup>

The animator Hans Fischerkoesen (1896-1973), former Hans Fischer, born in Bad Koesen (hence his surname), was discovered in Leipzig by Pinschewer. Fischerkoesen worked for Pinschewer until 1928. He had momentary employment at the propaganda film society “Epoche”, and changed over to the Ufa-propaganda film department that was founded in the same Year. After becoming chief draughtsman he awarded his own studio in Potsdam.

William Moritz, summed up Fischerkoesen’s early life extremely well, giving us a good insight into his beliefs.

Because of his asthma, Hans could not serve as a soldier during World War 1, but he did work in army hospitals near the front lines, where he experienced the grotesque inanity of trench warfare. He dreamed about making an animation film, “Das Loch im Westen (The Hole in the West)”, which would expose the War Profiteer as the true cause of war-and the real manipulator of victory and defeat.

When the war ended, Fischerkoesen returned to his family home and spent months drawing about 1,600 sequential images that made concrete the dream (or rather nightmare) vision he had experienced in the trenches. He took the drawings to a Leipzig movie company and paid them (a borrowed) 700 marks to photograph them;

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<sup>5</sup> The Dawes plan was an international contract, which established the highs of the German reparation payments for the foreign countries.

<sup>6</sup> Sparkasse. 21/1933, p. 430.

but, as it turned out, the company was near bankruptcy and had never shot single-frame material before. Hans lost that money, but he persevered to build his own animation stand out of a wooden margarine crate and shot it himself. Fischerkoesen described the film as a political cartoon brought to life, and it certainly suggests something of Bertold Bartosch's "L'idee (The Idea), made a decade later. Fortunately, a local distributor bought "Hole in the West for 3,000 marks, so he could continue to make more films.<sup>8</sup>

After Fischerkoesen accomplished his first successful advertising film for the Leipzig shoe factory Nordheimer, "Bummel –Petrus (Strolling Peter)" in 1921, he signed a two-year contract with Julius Pinschewer.

In Pinschewer and Fischerkoesen's 77 metre film, "The penny must bring it", it matters over a lonely money-box quoting a rhyme, that it's innards are empty and that no one believes in saving any more. A single penny characterised with arms and legs appears quoting (again in a rhyme), that one should not misapprehend the power of a penny, when a hundred of them make one Mark. The penny wanders about, and many other pennies join him and climb into the empty moneybox. The moneybox is happy and quotes an other rhyme: "Strong in value should it stay, when in the Savings Bank you should it pay." The full money-box, with hands and legs, runs to the Savings Bank and shakes itself out, quoting that if the penny lies safe, it should get pennies by itself. The film cuts over to the banks account settlement, where we see the account settlements book next to a pile of money. We hear an other quote about how you can buy your self a farmhouse after the pile of money gets bigger. The moneybox greets a young couple in front of a family house and quotes that every one should save 50 Marks in a year, for we need pounds not dollars. A blackboard appears on the screen, displaying the following words: If 20 million Germans save 1 Mark in a week, then more then 1 billion Gold-Mark will be achieved in one Year. A moneybag with "1 billion Gold-Mark" written on it, appears on the screen. The text on the blackboard says: "That's why; let's go to the Savings Bank!"

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<sup>7</sup> Reichskanzler Luther at the first World savings day 1925. Quoted in: Friedl, Friedrich, a.a.O., p. 64

<sup>8</sup> Paraphrased: William Moritz 1991, Society for Animation Studies Conference held at the Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York.

This short propaganda film was planned and shaped by Hans Fischerkoesen and gained, due to the quick changes of animated sequences and titling, a special dynamic. At the end, the text multiplies. This system was former used by silent advertising films; therefore many informative advertisement messages could be screened. Fischerkoesen used his artistic media that in future became his master sign. The realisation of dead objects coming to life as characters do not only appear as grotesque and funny creatures but also carry due to their humanised actions the message to the public.

“The penny must bring it” was re-released in April 1925, with a length of 133m, by the Berliner Censure, for the Berlin Savings Bank and the Torgau Savings Bank. It is evident that individual Savings Banks acquired different copies to cover the local interest.<sup>9</sup> The film is in its first censure length in the Bundes Film archive Berlin.<sup>10</sup> The Savings Bank association recognised already in the early stages the unique trick technique of the propaganda films. With this technique it was possible to tell a story in a short time, flowing with artistic qualities. A high percentage of propaganda short films (circa 150 m in length) were therefore produced as animation films. Hans Fischerkoesen animated the film “Der kluge Einfall” (The clever idea) that was again produced by the publicity GmbH Julius Pinschewer, and it was censored in 28.5.1925 with a length of 27 meters.

All in all, this period of Fischerkoesen’s life, is much like many other young men, eager to make their mark on their particular profession and the world in general, without the bitter ability of hindsight that we have today. To judge Fischerkoesen as a willing pawn in the Nazi regime, as the Russians did after the war, is totally unfair, especially as we must judge him as we would ourselves. He is no angel but at the same time he cannot be said to be any worse than any other young man. He had no idea that his work would later be used by such a tyrannical state, to perpetrate such evil. In fact, many of his actions show that even though he was in great danger from standing up to that which he did not agree with. Fisherkoesen, much like Pinschewer, would rather run the risk of Goebbels wrath, than sit idly by, whilst his ethics were ignored, as it now becomes clear the majority of Germans did. Pinscherwer may have

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<sup>9</sup> Amsler, Andre, a.a.O., p. 155.

<sup>10</sup> Ebenda, S. 154-155.

been dubbed as the ‘Father of Swiss Propaganda’ yet he was no mere pawn. By the same standard, Fisherkoesen was also associated with the Nazis, yet his actions tell a very different story.

## **CHAPTER 2: Fisherkoesen, Contemporary Animators, the German Populous and the Nazis.**

With animated advertisements for the “Savings Bank” , the national socialist regime had by 1934, already displayed the intention to deduct financial resources for rearmament of the Wehrmacht. This would later lead to the “silent war finance”, deducting societies resources without their full consent or knowledge. The message of those advertisement films was insidious yet extremely clever, hidden as they were under the national socialistic idea of high morality and strong family values. The structure and content of the Savings Bank advertisement met the ideas of Reich’s propaganda minister Goebbels, who decided how the economy advertisement had to work in the NSDAP (national socialist German workers party):

“Advertising is never an end in itself, in the same way, just as economy is not. Economy advertisement has to serve the economy, and with it the populace.”<sup>11</sup>

This statement by Goebbels, shows the Nazi viewpoint, which in itself is very different from our own views on economy today. Yet, it fails to highlight the main role of advertisement in Germany at the time. That of subtle control, through suggestion. The Nazis rarely invented any hatred or idea for themselves, instead they strengthened existing prejudices with the aid of films, posters and adverts.

Goebbels, repeatedly underlined the importance of advertisement as he did with all forms of propaganda. It was to portray Germany and the Nazi party in the role of the righteous, so that many things could be accomplished through the belief that one was working towards a higher goal. Through, brainwashing the populace into a certain method of thinking, the Nazi party was able to accomplish some of the most horrendous acts of brutality and inhumanity in history. All of this in a supposedly civilised nation. Whether, one believes that these acts were always in the German people or that they were ideas pushed upon them by their masters, one cannot argue with the important role of propaganda, in the Nazi regime. Should one then blame men like Fischerkoesen for producing much of this propaganda? Perhaps, yet are they any more to blame than the soldiers, arms workers, or even postmen. The vast

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<sup>11</sup> Goebbels speech before the advertisements council of the German administration of economy. In: Deutsche Sparkassen-Zeitung. 127/1933 from 2.11.1933, p.3.

majority of Germans never voted for the Nazis and were as much victims of them as were the peoples of many other countries. I believe that it is only in an analysis of ones actions on a personal level, that we may judge these people and Fisherkoesen is not found wanting here. Again we must look at his life and the state of Germany at the time of his most recognised work.

The animated films for the propaganda for the Savings Bank was not produced by the Savings Bank itself but by commissioned film production company, that specialised in propaganda films. Important firms in this sense were the department of propaganda of the Ufa<sup>12</sup>, Boehner-Film Dresden, Doering-Film Hanover, Tiller-Film Berlin, Kinomat-Film Wuppertal as well as the Tolirag and the Epoche in Berlin. Those and other firms were greatly affected by the central switch and control-board of the Nazis. The statute over administrative propaganda from 12.9.1933 forced them into a membership and therefore the participation in the counsel of propaganda of German economy, whose members were nominated by Goebbels himself.<sup>13</sup>

The entire public and private advertisement and propaganda affairs were put under the authority of the supervision and control of the German Reich and the counsel of advertisement for the German economy was founded, and put under the Goebbels ministry of enlightenment and propaganda (and not the ministry of economy).

“Whoever wishes to carry out economy propaganda, requires permission of the advertisement counsel”.<sup>14</sup>

This propaganda counsel erupted rapidly into an influential authority, which instructions had to be obeyed by all German publicity-workers. The German publicity or propaganda filmmakers had consequently to be able to deal with a secondary censure and instructions.

“Propaganda is the face of the economy, and this should be a German face: noble and vielgestaltig, plain and clever”,

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<sup>12</sup> Ufa (Universum Film AG. Berlin).

<sup>13</sup> Reichsgesetzblatt 1933, I, S. 625-626

<sup>14</sup> Paragraph 3 of the law from 12. September 1933

wrote Emil Endres, author and actor in many propaganda films, he participated the Ufa”.<sup>15</sup>

The organisations were not included in with the propaganda-ministerial connected Reich’s-film-chamber yet. But after an order of the president of the Reich’s film chamber from 18.2.1935 suggested that every propaganda sound film had to be inspected for a censure by the “Filmpruefstelle” (Film-test-station), before it could be screened in cinemas that are allowed by the film chamber.<sup>16</sup>

After the establishment of the Deutsche Zeichenfilm GmbH(German Drawing Film GmbH), on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1941, animators from all over Germany and neighbouring countries were trained to produce anti-Semitic films under Goebbels wish. In 1943 around 200 draughtsmen and pupils were busy producing ‘propaganda animation’. Although the “German Drawing Trick GmbH” was the daughter company of the Ufa, there was no mention in any of the Ufa-records of this financially sound and lavishly equipped firm. It even boasted a animation drawing school. A notable pupil was the German actress and chansons singer Hildegard Knef who trained there as a draughtsman.

It was during the height of the War when the NS-Regime, still convinced it would be victorious, aiming for military and geographic expansion, saw Goebbels establishing a secondary company, The Mars-Film GmbH. Founded on the 22 December 1942 became as important to the majority of the propaganda filmmakers as the Deutsche Zeichenfilm GmbH. Max Winkler became the organiser and financier of these 2 new animation establishments and stayed, via the film-credit-bank, in direct contact with Goebbels. Winkler dedicated his attention and support to the two firms until the end of the War. Goebbels demanded to be kept constantly informed, as to the financial and physical situation of the two firms. Damages caused by bombings and the condition of production had to be reported immediately.

Without any income from the Deutsche Zeichenfilm GmbH, enormous financial contributions were invested in to the construction and work until 1945, while the other firm worked without gaining any profit. The literal motive and cause of the

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<sup>15</sup> Emil Endres, Die neue Gesinnung in der Werbung, in: Deutsche Werbung (German publicity ) 1933, p. 381

exceptional position of both firms, was that the NS-regime in persona with Goebbels and Winkler, who both had a direct and linear ambition to release their film and brand of war politics. With the control over both firms they had the control of two special film areas without having to accept contradiction and consideration, that usually was the case in real-and culture-film production. Many German propaganda filmmakers had to compromise for their activity in both the firms, to proceed their *métier*, to sublimate their knowledge in propaganda films and to extend its field. With that they succeeded, without any nominal value an inner and artistic occupation, to support their families during the War period, without serious endangering of their existence. As far as the possibility allowed them, they included the younger propaganda filmmaker, the following generation, into their organisation. Who would see it as a form of survival strategy.

Such consequences could of course not have been thought of by Goebbels, Winkler or even by the propaganda filmmakers themselves, when the two firms were established. As problematic as it was for Winkler's mission at the Reich's agreement of the German film economy, as conducive was his effort towards the German filmmakers, in which he helped to found the "Deutsche Zeichenfilm GmbH and the Mars-Film GmbH, that he later strongly favored. With the continuation of the war after 1942, the German film industry had to give up its cinema loot that came together since 1939. The "German Drawing Film GmbH and the Mars-Film GmbH, in which most propaganda filmmakers were occupied and running a new and later only working fields, were not affected.

Julius Pinschewer, founder of the German publicity film had to leave Germany in 1933 for being a Jew. He established a new existence in Switzerland where he later was recognised as the father of the Swiss propaganda film. During the NS-time he kept contact with several of his colleagues. When in 1934/35 the animator Walter Born worked for Pinschewer in Bern for 10 month, the German Reich's film chamber grew suspicious and raised the following question: "If film creators work with emigrants or Jews that established their own firms in foreign countries, would it not harm German interests?"

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<sup>16</sup> Order of the Reich's film chamber over the screening of propaganda films in German Cinemas from 18.2.35. In *Wirtschaftswerbung (economy propaganda)* 2/1935, p. 45-46.

Hermann Grau, Fischerkoesen's first cameraman, left Germany. A big "J" was stamped on his papers, suggesting of being a Jew. From June 1936 he was marked to be "on travels" and his arrival in Brussels was reported on 12. January 1939. If he was accompanied by his wife Ella or his son Wolfgang is unknown. Nothing can be found of his fate after this date and one can only hope that he was not sent to the camps along with millions of other missing people.

The cameraman and trick specialist Gerhard Huttula, trainee and assistant of Wolfgang Kaskeline, emigrated in 1933 to Argentina and returned to Germany in 1937. The NS regime banished very few advertisement-filmmakers, compared to movie filmmakers. These artists were the leaders of a vitally important field to the Nazis and could not be lost.

For many years, Hans Fischerkoesen managed to keep his production confined to the kind of advertising films he did so well. But after the 1941 edict (concerning the correct production of propaganda film), the Propaganda Minister demanded that he move his staff and studio to Potsdam, near Ufa's Neubabelsberg studios, to be available for consultations and special effects on features and documentaries. When the 45-year-old Fischerkoesen, loathe to become any more closely involved with Goebbels than necessary, protested that he didn't really have the talent to invent ideas for story film, he was assigned to work with 35-year-old Horst Moellendorf, a popular Berlin newspaper cartoonist who had just been "drafted" to work as a gag man for animated cartoons.

Among the specific things that Goebbels mandated for the new German cartoon industry was the development of "three-dimensional" effects which could be competitive with the Fleishers' Stereo-Optical process (which combined model sets with cel animation) or Disney's multiplane camera (which filmed several layers of cells). Fischerkoesen had already been using a simple multiplane effect derived from the multilayered glass animations that Lotte Reiniger used. Fischerkoesen had also been working with puppet and model animation, and could hardly have been ignorant of Oskar Fischinger's brilliant simulation of a deep-space travelling boom shot around the Muratti cigarettes parading towards the Olympic stadium in his classic 1934 ad film *Muratti Gets in the Act*.

The opening sequence of *Weather-beaten Melody* (1942), Fischerkoesen's first film made under the government edict, demonstrates a bravura mastery of both the

multiplane and stereo-optical process- and a meaningful use of depth, following the flight of a bee down from the sky, through 12 layers of grass and flowers in a meadow, and circling around an abandoned phonograph which lies, puzzlingly for the bee, in the middle of the meadow. Behind this long point of view sequence is the assumption that the bee is a personage worthy of following, and in fact she turns out to be adventurous, resourceful, perceptive, talented, witty, and friendly, among other admirable, even noble “human” characteristics. Fischerkoesen demonstrates these traits in little episodes characteristic of his style: she uses dandelion seeds as parachutes for a joyous free ride; her game of tossing a blueberry ends in disaster (the overripe fruit bursts over her head), but she meticulously wipes herself clean on a daisy petal. He also delineates her personality with unexpected complexities. For example, is she jealous of the hedgehog who takes over her place as “phonograph needle” when she is away sharpening her stinger- or is she merely exasperated at the confusing quality of his multi-needle pickup? The very idea of ambiguity was anathema to the Nazis, who could only hope to maintain their fascist program by enforcing strict, unbending codes of behaviour, and absolute, inviolable “ideals and truths.” Precisely because of its technical brilliance, *Weather-beaten Melody* could get away with quite a bit of forbidden information.

Ironically, inherent in the “stereo” animation techniques, as Fischerkoesen uses them, lies the most subversive metaphor: a sense of freedom of movement, an affirmation of the multi-layered nature of reality- of ambiguity and change- which demands (even subconsciously) that the viewer think for herself and consider other things as valid as the subjective self- something truly forbidden by Nazi doctrine as the most dangerous action of all.

To fully appreciate Fischerkoesen’s daring, one must remember that the Nazis had forbidden jazz and swing as an Afro-Judaic plot to undermine traditional German culture. The catalogue of the 1937 “Degenerate Film” exhibition contained an anti-jazz spread entitled “Africa Speaks...?” which stigmatised “Al Jolson-Rosenblatt” among other black and black-face jazz musicians, and the 1938 “Degenerate Music” catalogue featured the image of a black saxophone player wearing a Star of David. Detlev Peukert chronicles how the “swing movement” became a key symbolic rebellion, while the British film *Swing Under the Swastika* documents the sad and ironic fates of jazz musicians during this period. In this context, the discovery of an abandoned phonograph takes on new meaning, especially when the record on the

turntable is a swing number with lyrics that say, “The week wouldn’t be worthwhile without a weekend when we can get away to enjoy nature.” Near the phonograph lies an “abandoned” clasp from a woman’s garter belt (with a lucky four-leafed clover growing out of it!), which suggests that the interrupted picnic that left behind the musical instrument had also involved erotic play- something also strictly forbidden by the puritanical Nazi codes. So from beneath the charming surface of this cartoon emerges a subversive message: women, far from the unnatural Nazi-designated stereotype of “children, church and kitchen,” can escape into Nature to be self-reliant and adventurous, erotic and free- they can rediscover or revitalise a suppressed world of forbidden joy in music and friendship between diverse creatures who may be brown or white, frog or caterpillar- or even a pair of ladybug beetles who may be a same-sex couple. Especially compared to the American cartoons of this same period (profligate with gratuitous violence and racist/sexist stereotype victims), the entire community of animals depicted in *Weather-beaten Melody* is peaceful, friendly, fun-loving, imaginative and altruistic- quite the opposite of the Nazi requirements for a dedicated Aryan citizen.<sup>17</sup>

The NS-family ideal was represented as the man as the head of the household supporting the family, and the woman /mother managing the household and the upbringing of the children. This NS-propaganda idyll is at the heart of almost all the propaganda films. The toughened, trained sporty stereotype who was to become the perfect soldier, dominated the masculine portrait. The disciplined and modest woman refused the use of cosmetic beauty materials, for the sake of cleanliness and health. That’s how it was shown in the “Nivea” publicity, which was made as a series by Tolirag for the Beiersdorf AG in 1935/36. The average length of the series was circa one and a half minutes. Elly Heuss-Knapp, the wife of the later president, participated in the arrangement of the script. Pinschewer’s silhouette-cutter Rudi Klemm worked on several parts of the series.

Freelance and employed authors were responsible for the script of every propaganda film (including the short animated films) that was received by the customer and the film firm. The animated film was the domain of the propaganda film, and the usage of

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<sup>17</sup> Paraphrased: William Moritz 1991 Society for Animation Studies Conference held at the Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York.

most modern and technical effects had to be supplied. In one of the few surviving contract forms it states that all the protagonists in the films have to be in constant movement. All holds, even between cuts have to be avoided and all the movements have to flow in a smooth and soft way.<sup>18</sup>

This was primarily due to Goebbels belief that insidious films, films that the viewing public actually enjoyed and could identify with, were far more powerful than the shock tactics that many Nazis would have preferred. He appears to have been correct in this assumption, as these films were extremely popular, much as the American, Walt Disney films, which also portrayed pro US, anti Japanese/ German imagery. i.e. allied propaganda. Hitler was not convinced with Goebbels approach and specifically ordered a much more brutal film to be produced, clearly identifying Jews with a swarm of rats, eating away at German society. The film was very brutal, obvious and clearly shocking, as hundreds of people fainted watching it, in cinemas throughout Germany. Needless to say it was very unpopular and quickly buried by Goebbels, who was commonly portrayed as the ‘clever nazi’ by the allies. Goebbels use of animation and cute, adorable characters, to help strengthen the Nazi message worked far better. The populace were being brainwashed into a certain method of thinking, without being aware of the situation and thus not taking exception to it. Instead they were allowed to relate to these simple tales of woe and tragedy that befell the good animals and people, and clearly identify the evil ‘Jewish’ characters.

Thus a series of mentionable animation films were created to serve political manipulation. At the same time, those particular films initiated a technically and artistically innovative development of this genre. Even today they are of viewing standard, not only because their content is so ‘childlike’ but also because they are of a suitably competent standard. In fact many such films were recently purchased by Channel 4 as ‘cartoons’ that were to be shown to children. What this says about the films, be they fairly common in content and message to Walt Disney or that Channel 4 are merely penny pinching idiots, is debatable!

The publicity film for Philips Radio “Vier Asse“(four aces) advertised the product of the ace series radio, which had a global reception, around the globe. Georg Pal, a native Hungarian and former manager of the animation department of Ufa, was

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<sup>18</sup> Ufa-Vorstandsprotokoll, from 14. December 1938

especially renowned for his puppetry. In 1933 he left Germany and fled to the USA, where he later was nominated in Science-Fictions-Films with an Oscar for his special effects. A valve radio “Volksempfänger” (the nation's receiver) also known as “Goebbelschnauze” (Goebbels mouth trap) became one of Goebbels media to fool the German nation. In the film “The battle over Miggershausen”,<sup>19</sup> an animated Volksempfänger wanders to the town Miggershausen, where the knowledge for modern technology in agriculture had failed to take place. The Volksempfänger's mission is to advertise the broadcast, especially transmissions over agricultural themes. After the farmers had kicked him out, he calls for reinforcements and a whole army of Volksempfänger march off to attack the place. The victory of the informative propaganda is celebrated and the educated farmers transformed Miggershausen into an exemplary town that was ultimately renamed as “Frohenhausen” (happy home).

Due to the producers of animated films, political manipulation was drawn into entertainment. A series of so called “animation-joke films” begun, with which the national socialists could blend their chauvinistic and human scorning ideas under the populace in a funny way. In the animation production the contents and the artistic style repeated what was started at the First World War. For example appeared the British archenemy “John Bull” in continuous anti British propaganda films again. The filmstrips were psychologically fed with national ideas. The enemy propaganda, - especially against England and France, - in hope for the German victory of war. After the beginning of the Second World War in 1. September 1939, the economy was adjusted to the War requirements by law. Already in June of the same Year, was with the law of the German Reich's Bank from 15. June 1939,<sup>20</sup> the independence of the note bank facing the Reich abolished. Henceforth, due to the change to the Reich's Bank, the unlimited pre-finance of the war could ensue, which again derives its media out of the savings of the people. The slogan: “Saving provides work and bread” was replaced with: “Save for victory”.

The trigger for the changes in the Savings Bank advertisement from 1940 was especially the speech of the president of the German Savings Bank-and Giro

<sup>19</sup> Die Schlacht um Miggershausen. 1937. 35mm colour 351m. Idea, Paul Schwaerzel. Animation by Georg Woelz. Produced by, Comerz-Film, Berlin Zeichentrick.

<sup>20</sup> Reich's law paper 1939, I, p. 1015ff.

Association Dr. Heintze on 4.1.1940 in Goerlitz. He demanded a wider and popular savings propaganda, which should deliver the message to the small-saver in a stronger way. The film medium had to reinforce to accept as true a voluntary believes in savings. New savings methods<sup>21</sup> and the intensifying of existing collective ways of saving were introduced. The expansion of the savings-action in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, followed in even bigger measures than the time of 1933-1939 the double aim, to make certain, that the buying-strength of the populace reinvest their money into accounts that institutes the finance of armament. In addition the War-burden claimed its tribute and therefore it had to be saved in any aspect. It is not surprising that a tidal wave of corresponding savings films appeared in the cinemas after 1940. Towards the end of 1942 only propaganda films, that with their message created a direct connection to the savings-action, were allowed in the cinemas. Some firms tried to praise their products through a detour for the savings-proclamation (like for Osram).

In spite of the partly ruded savings-appal, those messages found themselves less of an audience in the last two years of the War. “Hamster-purchases” and money strongholds increased, the direct inflation could even through prise- and wage stop not be hidden any longer. A financial breakdown followed the breakdown of the National Socialism’s, and by the War’s end the Reich was indebted to banks and insurance companies an amount of 189 billion Reich’s Mark. There from, 54 billion Reich’s Mark belonged to the “Savings Banks”. The total amount of the Reichs debts measured 95% of the inland finance assets. In compare to 1939, the money circulation increased to 400%.<sup>22</sup> Ironically, Bernard Baruch, an American of Jewish ancestry donated \$1,100,000 in April 27, 1944, to aid physical medicine at a time when the dollar could have helped save Jewish victims from the gas chambers.

In 1936, Germany had 5259 cinemas, which were visited by 362 million people. At the beginning of 1937 Goebbels bought secretly the individual firms of the German film industry, to include them as property of the German Reich. In other words, he transferred the film industry to the NS-state. By 1938 all German film production companies were in the possession of the NS-regime. Single individual freelanced film firms could continue to produce their films under the Ufa-Film GmbH, nevertheless

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<sup>21</sup> Firstly the “War savings method on the home front” in the frame of fellowship saving was introduced. In October 1941 “Strict saving” – the biggest “War special saving way” was taking measure.

under the possession of the NS State with its monopolising conduct. The Ufa, like all the other film production companies were pressurised with the demand and expectation of the NS-regime. Without an explanation, the Ufa relented itself to the anti-Semitic pressure and removed all Jewish workers and artists. Many of them ended up in Concentration Camps. The propaganda department of the Ufa produced several propaganda films that idealise the NS-ideology. It also produced several propaganda films for the election of the NSDAP. For an election propaganda film from March 1936, which title could not be identified (probably for the re militarisation of the Rhine land 1936), thanked the vice president of the Reich's film chamber, Mr. Weidemann on 2. April 1936, the manager of the Ufa propaganda film department Arnold Funke, the director Dr. Johannes Guter and the animator Herta Juelich. The NS member Weideman gave special gratitude to Herta Juelich, for her effort in working long shifts even in late hours. "Keep your eagerness up, especially when you have to work for the nation and the fuehrer."<sup>23</sup>

The propaganda animators had to get along more or less with the NS-regime. If any of them practised a sort of inner immigration, then we at least cannot prove this. At least some of them did deviate from the original idea that was given by the regime through the Reich's film chamber and the propaganda council. Occasionally, nuances could be recognised in some of the propaganda films, which can be identified as subversive towards the NS-regime. Because they did not completely serve the NS-film and propaganda aesthetic but instead silently ironised it optically and artistically. Those nuances certainly were only hard to notice and drowned under the NS-picture wave. Only a small amount of the propaganda filmmakers (like Anton Lindenberg) joined the NSDAP. None of them became an actual prominent party member.

The same spirit of ambiguity and subversive subtext pervades Fischerkoesen's next film, 1943's *The Snowman*. The opening sequence, as in *Weather-beaten Melody*, establishes the filmmaker's bravura mastery of creating the illusion of three-dimensional space. Behind the credits, we see layers of snowflakes, with their elaborate abstract patterns (including pure geometrical circles- all of which justify "degenerate" abstract art as a natural phenomenon!), falling down through the frame.

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<sup>22</sup> Hansmeyer, Karl-Heinz and Caesar, Rolf, a.a.O., p. 402-416.

<sup>23</sup> Bundesarchiv Berlin, R 56 VI, Vice president Reich's film chamber Weidemann and Guter, Funke and Juelich, 2. April 1936.

As the credits finish, the viewer flies down over a snow-covered twilight village, around the steeple of a church (a stereo-optical model), down to a snowman in an open space- just as if seen from a snowflake's point of view. This point of view is confirmed when snowflakes alight on the snowman in the pattern of a heart- suggesting that he is a creature of feeling, rather than a military/political figure (who would wear medals or insignia), or an ostracised victim (such as the Jews or gays who wore yellow stars and pink triangles). Unlike the opening of *Weather-beaten Melody*, which establishes the point of view as that of the protagonist bee, *The Snowman's* opening sets us up as a visitor/observer.

*The Snowman* is a more complex and "humanly" equivocal character than the bee, and thereby makes us question the meanings behind the actions he is involved in- and ultimately the social context from which he comes. In his *Aspects of the Novel*, E. M. Forster discusses two principles of narrative organisation, which are particularly relevant to *The Snowman*. He points out that pattern, the audience's slow perception of an overall shape or direction to the story, can heighten our awareness of the inexorable conditions that produce the narrative "destiny," whether it be, for example, the traits of personality that cause a protagonist to succeed or fail, or the nexus of social conditions that bring together a diverse group of people to a particular time, place an incident. Forster also observes that rhythm, the regular recurrence of certain details, events or persons in a story, can cause us to re-evaluate the meaning of both the repeating item and the narrative as a whole. Fischerkoesen employs both pattern and rhythm to make us consider seriously the plight and destiny of the snowman.

In the film's first episode, the snowman begins to play by juggling snowballs- a curiously appropriate pastime. His game angers a watchdog, and in his attempts to get away, squashes the dog into the snow and then laughs at its distress. When the dog then bites a chunk out of his rump, the snowman finally get rid of it by pelting it with snowballs. The snowman tries to have fun again by skating on an icy pond (using icicles for skates), but finds the three snowballs of his body beginning to bounce apart. Soon, the ice breaks and the snowman is melted down to a skeleton of his former self, but restores himself by rolling down hill until he regains his former bulk, only to have his torso and head get mixed up again. A crow helps reassemble his body. A tree laughs at him as he had laughed at the dog, so the crow shakes its coat of snow away as revenge. While the snowman tries to nap, a rabbit attempts to steal his carrot-nose. He decides to go inside to sleep where it will be safer.

As he walks into a cottage, the viewer is treated to a spectacular 180-degree stroll around the building, which recall the brilliant opening shot of the City Square. Once inside, he disturbs a grumpy cat in order to sleep on its couch, and the cat's huffy hiss reminds us of the petulant, territorial dog's snappy barks. Increasingly, we become aware that (as the ones – in fact, a “pattern” which contrasts the events in “Winterland” with those in “Summerland,” and several “rhythmic” recurrences heightens our perception of the differences between these alternate worlds.

The snowman notices his own picture on the winter portion of the calendar, but also sees (on later months) some unfamiliar flowers. So, he decides to hide out in the refrigerator, so that he may remerge when the flowers are in bloom. When he attempts to leave in July, however, his rump has stuck to the refrigerator shelf and he loses a chunk, which he regains by turning down the temperature in the icebox (an intelligent, ecological choice- also recalling his earlier ruse of throwing snowballs at the dog until the dog retaliated by tossing back his lost rump-chunk as a weapon). He plays pranks on the chicken and cows (just as he had teased the dog in Winterland), yet when he finds that he is freezing a ladybug, he kindly becomes a ski run for her by turning somersaults across a meadow- another dazzling animation feat. After he melts, singing “How lovely summer is; my heart breaks from happiness,” the rabbit finally eats his carrot-nose (and her bunnies frolic in his hat as if he had been a magician).

Parallel incidents reveal the complexities of the snowman's character and assess the ambiguities of the action as a parable: the snowman, an average person with some good and bad qualities, is trapped in a given environment, Winterland. Although it is functional, it is cold and in some ways inhospitable. He reads that there is another place, sunny and free, and arranges to escape there for some thrilling moments of warmth and freedom, even at the cost of his life, as we hear him gurgle in the death throes of song, twisting and melting in the hot sun. The dog, crow, cat, ladybug, rabbit, and others are characterised as parallel human-like creatures, which supports an open, thoughtful humanitarian worldview that was anathema to the Nazis. *The Snowman* is also full of beautiful, touching, affirmative and spectacular scenes, such as the long pan across unfolding spring.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Paraphrased: William Moritz. 1991 Society for Animation Studies Conference held at the Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York.

Fischerkoesen's third wartime film, *The Silly Goose* (1944), another of his thought-provoking parables. Through the bars of a wooden cage, riding on a cart going across town; a young goose glimpses the seemingly glamorous allures of city life. An more exotic bird, silhouettes in a dance hall, an elegant fox (stole) with feathers. Back at the farm, while her brothers and sisters receive their schooling in swimming, marching, laying eggs and such, she dreams narcissistically by a pond, swings on the gate like a parrot, uses the plough as a mirror, and creates for herself a pseudo-sophisticated costume by thieving and exploiting her neighbours. She industriously produces or 'obtains' a straw bottle-cover hat, pollen powder, a spider-web veil, cork high-heels, and pig-bristle eyelashes. This 'new goose' is met with an air of mixed anger and astonishment, throughout the farm. However, the gander chooses to woo her instead of her more modest sisters. Yet, she rejects him and wanders off into the woods, where she is seduced by a fox. The fox's sinister lair is run by slave labour – a weasel cranking a spit, a cat on a treadmill that makes xylophone music with dangling bones- and a cage full of geese waits for slaughter. She manages to escape, and the barnyard animals cooperate to drive the fox away and free his victims.

While *Silly Goose* seems to satisfy Goebbels' dictum for "blood and soil" films that glorify German peasant life, Fischerkoesen creates a complex and ambiguous narrative that confuses and contradicts Nazi policy. The city is glamorous- especially as seen in a long stereo-optical, multiplane sequence from the goose's point of view- while the barnyard activities are quaint and confining. At the same time, the goose's exploitation of the barnyard for her costume is mean and thoughtless. When the goose is deduced by the fox, we momentarily hear a crypto version of the old (Yiddish) popular song "Bei mir bist Du scheen," and could think at first that the villain is being identified as a Jew. Quickly, however we see that just the opposite is true: the goose herself is being exploited. The fox is using her as he does various other animals, which seems to allude to the Nazis' exploitation of the Jews, as slave labour and prisoners doomed to execution.

This subtext becomes even more obvious by comparison with two other German films of the period: Hans Held's 1940 *Der Stoerenfried* (The Troublemaker) (in which the fox is a simplistic villain, and the farm animals drive him away in specifically militaristic fashion) and Frank Leberecht's 1943 *Armer Hansi* (Poor Hansi) (where the gratuitous violence that drives Hansi the canary back home rivals the worst of Warner Bros., truly supporting a "blood and soil" ideal). Very much to the

contrary, *The Silly Goose* warns against being seduced by the glamour of fascism, and encourages us to think carefully about home and the city and responsibility – to realise what happens to victims and to do something about it.

So, in these three cartoon masterpieces, we see how Hans Fischerkoesen demonstrated that even at the darkest, most menacing hours of human depravity, men of principle may resist by subverting, with subtlety, the rules and prejudices of the tyrant.

At the end of the war, the invading Russian troops arrested Fischerkoesen as a possible Nazi collaborator. Although he could prove that he was not only never a Nazi sympathiser but actually a member of an underground resistance group of artists during the war years, he was kept in Sachsenhausen concentration camp for three years before he was exonerated. During that time, he worked in the kitchen, painted ironic, allegorical wall murals using vegetable caricatures, which are now preserved as a national historical monument.

As in great animal fables, these murals play out the daily trials and terrors of prison living, yet provide an ironical perspective by enacting these traumas through items that we would eat without a second thought. A parsnip inspects a carrot for “vermin” (i.e., a worm), while another parsnip stands by, sharpening his knife (surgical or punitive?): is it not absurd that parsnips should be in control of carrots, when they’re clearly relatives? Another carrot gratefully showers under a plain facet spigot, while potatoes, eager for a swim, peel off their own skins and dive into the soup. A procession of happy cucumbers carry a pumpkin on a palanquin, yet they also help each other to slice themselves away on a “kitchen guillotine.” These (and other) paintings of Fischerkoesen provide a glimpse of humanitarian warmth in the grim camp where so many suffered and lost their lives.

By the time Fischerkoesen was finally released, he had shown that he was not a Nazi, but also that he was no communist; thus, he was not allowed to work privately on his own films, but only as a functionary on assignments in the state-controlled DEFA studios. Later that year, 1948, he and his family made one of those daring night-time escapes from East Germany, carrying only a camera; he then re-established his animation studio near Bonn in West Germany. He received critical acclaim: by 1956, he had won major prizes at commercial film festivals in Rome, Milan (three times), Venice, Monte Carlo, and Cannes. He also appeared on the cover of the prestigious

*Der Spiegel*, Germany's equivalent of the American *Time* magazine. Fischerkoesen continued to make advertising films until 1969, and died in 1973.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Paraphrased: This article was extracted from "Resistance And Subversion in Animated Films of The Nazi Era: the Case of Hans Fischerkoesen," that was first published the premiere issue of Animation

## **Conclusion**

I believe that Nazi propaganda in animation is widely varied and worthy of both analysis and discussion. It gives one an excellent insight into the mindset of a people who, although they lived only fifty years ago, are very alien to us today.

Although, the Nazis aims and objectives were far from those of many modern animators, they were obviously worried about affecting a change in people's attitudes and beliefs. This is not so different from much modern animation in advertising; it seems that the power of the dollar is an almost universal one in our lives.

Fischerkoesen was forced to make animated films that served another purpose, throughout his career. The Russians that 'liberated' him certainly believed that his role in the war was suitably evil, to warrant his imprisonment in Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, for three years. Yet, were they any better, for they also used the propaganda machine via the media of animation to alter their people's perceptions of the world?

Even today, one is shocked by the similarity between Walt Disney and the Nazi animation film industry. Not simply because the Nazis copied their animation styles but at a more significant level, because Goebbels was extremely impressed with the Walt Disney propaganda animation. Walt Disney, a company in a democratic country, was already exploiting animation for their propaganda needs. Even today, we are force fed a diet of propaganda through the media. Can anyone really say that they have not noticed the changes that have taken place in animation throughout the decades? We have very recently exchanged the old style of cartoon violence, for a more Politically Correct method of cartoon scripting. Instead of bloodshed we have moralistic parables as to what is and what is not excepted in society. Perhaps this is unavoidable, yet where will the whims on the filmmakers take us next?

So we have exchanged one style of political correctness for another. It seems a little out of place, as it hides behind the fact that it is funded entirely by commercialism. A force, which singles out our worries and weakness' as people and uses them to sell us products that we don't really need. It bombards us with images of people who are happy, people with the 'product' and thus plays upon our image consciousness. Unfortunately, many people cannot afford new cars, Rolex watches, holidays in the

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Journal (Fall 1992), which in turn was based on a paper presented by Moritz<sup>25</sup> at the 1991 Society for Animation Studies conference held at the Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, New York.

sun or beautiful women with enhanced chests. What horrible loathing it must create amongst the less advantaged, who must constantly live with these images being thrust at them everywhere one turns. Can we really attack Fischerkoesen for his role as an animator in the Nazi period, as even today animators must bow to the greater ulterior forces of commercialism and political correctness, when producing films. Only he had to live in fear of his life by rebelling against the system, whilst today it is only ones livelihood that is at stake.

As in all great stories there are the ‘good guys’ and the ‘bad guys’. The Nazis seem to me to most definitely fit into the latter category but Fischerkoesen does not. He was a victim of circumstance, living in a period of great social upheaval and change. Such change that we the generations of post war Europe, know little or nothing of. Where many embraced the Nazis he gallantly stood up for his beliefs, even though it could have cost his life. He played the Nazis at their own game and as much of his animation shows he beat them.

Yet as life certainly proves, people will always act as puppets for fear of their lives and although he outwitted one socialist regime, the next one proved too much for him. He was kept imprisoned by the agents of ‘human equality on earth’, who also operated through a doctrine of fear, lies and propaganda. Both regimes were full of murderers who operated under different banners. Unfortunately, Fischerkoesen was not deemed to be a politically correct citizen and was kept under guard for another five years of his already troubled life, by the communists.

It is in studying the past that we may learn from our mistakes. Also in studying people of great valour that we may attempt to live our own lives for the better and revel in our freedom. One must realise that this period of history is ‘living history’. By that I mean that people are still alive that can actually lay claim to having witnessed such events. Yet, soon these people will be gone and with them the real knowledge of these occurrences. Such things will have slipped into the realm of history, of boring school lessons and dusty old books. We should keep these memories and visions alive so that similar governments never repeat these events. One only has to look at Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor or Cambodia to see ethnic cleansing in action and even in modern, European countries we are unsafe, Austria now has a Conservative, Far right coalition government.

It is up to us to speak out against injustice and fight the evil that we find in society, just as Fischerkoesen did. If anybody is an inspiration to animation it is he.

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