Meeting on the Elbe (Vstrecha na El'be): A visual representation of the incipient Cold War from a Soviet perspective

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The article explores the most important Soviet film covering the incipient Cold War, Meeting on the Elbe. The production involved prominent Soviet filmmakers and actors. By juxtaposing the occupation policies of both superpowers in post-war Germany, the film makes crucial assumptions concerning the Soviet self and the US-American other. It attributes the full responsibility for the outbreak of the Cold War to the US-American political and military elites and argues the USSR has won the trust and support of the Germans due to its superior 'soft power'.

'Soft power' (Joseph Nye) has always been a tool of politics and diplomacy, and nothing would be further from the truth than to think this is or was exclusively an American forte because of America's widespread consumer culture and popular culture.¹ As a civilization priding itself on its progressiveness, the USSR was keen to harness new tools to its propaganda, especially in the incipient Cold War.² Successive Soviet regimes were well aware of the instrument of projecting soft power that the cinema represented.³ As for the arts in general, Soviet film since 1934 was ruled by the

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requirements of Socialist Realism,⁴ whether or not this would always be adhered to strictly in practice.⁵

The Soviet-produced film *Meeting on the Elbe* (*Vstrecha na El'be*)⁶ of 1949 reflects the official Soviet view of the origins of the Cold War and the competition of the systems. It shows how the USSR wanted to depict its policy towards Germany. The film was realised by one of the most distinguished film directors of the Stalin era, Grigorii Aleksandrov. He had worked as an assistant and scriptwriter alongside Sergei Eizenshtein,⁷ and in the 1930s accompanied him on a long journey to the USA, where he became acquainted with Hollywood, the dream factory. Since then, he has made films in which he has tried to beat the USA entertainment industry at its own game.⁸ In particular his musical comedy films, aimed at the masses, became legendary and still have a cult status today.⁹ Another long-term colleague of Eizenshtein was involved in the production of *Meeting on the Elbe*, namely Eduard Tissé, a prominent cameraman.¹⁰ The soundtrack to the film was written by no less than Dmitrii Shostakovich, who had suffered under the Soviet state's cultural and educational policy in 1936, but who had remained loyal to the Soviet system and had since managed to re-establish himself in the official cultural scene.¹¹ The film achieved further prominence due to the fact that two female roles were awarded to stars of the Soviet cinema. Both Liubov' Orlova, who had played leading roles in numerous other films by Aleksandrov, and the great tragicomic actress, Faina Ranevskaja, played leading parts.¹² The lead male role was performed by Vladlen Davydov, who, because of the film, became one of the few new stars of cinema in the 1940s. With his impressive figure, he was particularly well-suited physically to represent the superiority of Soviet power.¹³

Aleksandrov's film is set at a fictional location, Altenstadt on the Elbe.¹⁴ At the beginning, he shows how Nazi Germany sinks into chaos in the final stages of the war, and how many Germans try to flee the Red Army in the final days. Moments later, the Red Army triumphantly marches across the screen accompanied by its tanks, whereupon the Nazis go into hiding, or try to destroy all evidence of their Party membership. However, in the film the Red Army is received with huge jubilation by the majority of the population. The negative side effects of the occupation, such as the mass rape of German women, are not depicted.

As the film unfolds, the principles according to which the Soviet Union and the USA are ruling their respective occupation zones become obvious. In this context, *Meeting on the Elbe* shows the relationship between the Americans and Soviets gradually changing in the early years following the war, not least due to their different value systems.

In world politics, the film is set against the background of steadily deteriorating East–West relations. At the beginning of *Meeting on the Elbe* there is a highly emotional encounter between American and Soviet soldiers, who meet and hug each other on the banks of the Elbe. Already at this early point, a US General voices his displeasure at this affectionate, friendly contact of the allies, likewise at the popularity of the Red Army with his GIs. In his opinion, such fraternization is in general the worst

consequence of the war. Further on in the film, the tensions between the allies increase. Responsibility for this is attributed exclusively to the American side. Time and time again, it is made clear in the film that the elite of the US army in particular disapproves of the 'soft power' of the Soviet Union and sees it as a threat. The USSR obtains high popularity and authority in its occupied zone in *Meeting on the Elbe*, through its respect for the German population and its sensitivity to German culture – even among the bourgeoisie. In the film, the Soviet occupying power accomplishes what it had set out to do: to win the hearts and minds of the Germans. It does not build on naked military power and violence, but on the appeal of its value system and the Socialist lifestyle.¹⁵ In doing so, the Soviets, in contrast to the US, abstain from imposing the Soviet system upon Germany. Introducing this seems premature anyhow. This leads Commander Kuz'min to observe: 'One must first earn Soviet power'. He asserts that the USSR is above all interested in a democratic Germany.

The American turnaround from cooperation to confrontation with the Soviets is highlighted in several key scenes and motives. At the beginning of the film American and Soviet units build a temporary bridge over the Elbe. This equally signifies cooperation, as do the two huge US and Soviet flags which the US army has hung up on the bridge, in order to indicate the Americans are holding their allies in high regard.¹⁶ However, shortly after that, the Americans are no longer prepared to respect the arrangements¹⁷ decided upon at the 1945 Potsdam conference with the Soviet ally, while the Soviets continue to adhere to them unfailingly. The breach of the deal is depicted vividly in the film, when the US General assigned to the Elbe, MacDermott, rips into pieces the contract that was concluded with the Soviets. We are shown the scraps of paper as well as the friendship-proclaiming flags carried off by the waters of the Elbe.

The basic statements contained in the film *Meeting on the Elbe* comply with the 'Two-Camp-Theory', which was proclaimed by chief Soviet ideologist Andrei Zhdanov in 1947 at the famous founding meeting of the Cominform at Sklarska Poreba.¹⁸ It asserts that, in the world, two irreconcilable protagonists oppose each other: the Capitalist Camp, according to which, oppression, profit seeking and the pursuit of war prevail, and the Socialist Camp, which represents freedom, democracy and the struggle for peace.

This opposition runs throughout various levels and aspects of the film because both great powers are introducing their own 'worlds' into their respective zones. In doing so, they are confronted with a highly heterogeneous German population: we meet the bourgeois professor of engineering, Dietrich; his communist son Kurt Dietrich; a Nazi in the person of Otto Dietrich's son-in-law Ernst Schmetau; and Otto Dietrich's under-age son Walter, completely indoctrinated by National Socialist ideology. Then there is also the ruthless war criminal, Schrank.

Both sides deal with the German population very differently in their respective occupation zones. Embodied by their Commander Kuz'min, the Soviets appear to be an exemplary and generous occupation power, selflessly and sympathetically supporting the former opponents in their reconstruction efforts – in spite of the

vast pain, grief and devastation that the Germans have inflicted upon the Soviet Union. The fact that Kuz'min occasionally wears a white tunic at ceremonial events evokes both Stalin's dress uniform, and the moral purity of the officer and of the Soviet Union that he represents.

Kuz'min calls upon the Germans not to think of the past, which is so full of 'ruins, blood and shame', but of the future. In this context, the Soviet military administration even supports social groups which have no connection with the Soviet power, e.g. religious groups. Two nuns who have complained that the oil lamps around their holy pictures are empty are given machine gun oil by the Soviets, even though the Red Army has shortages in this area. The Germans presenting their grievances and registering their needs with the Soviet administration are answered in a friendly tone; all requests will be fulfilled as far as possible.

The Soviets are sincerely interested in the welfare of the Germans and, in accordance with the official ideology, distinguish clearly between fascism on the one hand, which was (and is) to be fought against, and the German population on the other, whom they treat amiably as long as they are not unreconstructed Nazis. The Red Army initially releases all anti-fascists from prison,¹⁹ who exuberantly express their gratitude and immediately resume their political activity. Furthermore, the Soviet occupying power declares itself in favour of an alliance of left-wing parties and draws even the middle classes into the administration of their zone. This is visually represented by the image of a handshake, repeated variously in the film, signifying peaceful, friendly and equal cooperation. As a poster or image, we see it on the walls of buildings, symbolising both the allegedly voluntary merger which took place in 1946 between the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party to form the SED, and, the unity of all classes in the occupied Soviet zone.²⁰ The film uses the example of the German engineer Otto Dietrich to show how the middle classes are wooed successfully. At first, Dietrich completely opposes the Soviets. He initially tries to flee, and upon failing refuses to surrender his patents for optical appliances as he sees them as German property. He explains this by harshly criticising the reparations payments imposed by the Soviet Union, which include the dismantling of production facilities. Commander Kuz'min justifies these measures as only modest compensation for the immense damage and huge suffering that fascism has inflicted on his home. Moreover, the commander emphasises that the Soviet Union is by no means destroying the armaments factories in their occupied zone only in order to obtain reparations, but with the overall goal of securing peace. Despite these differences in opinion, Kuz'min supports Dietrich's bid to become mayor of Altenstadt. The commander does not take the patents away from the engineer, but takes his word of honour that he will not allow them to get into the wrong hands.

After his patents are stolen from his safe, a Social Democrat who works with the US Army persuades Dietrich to escape to the US zone. There he only sees frightened, oppressed, exploited Germans, who exchange valuable art objects for money or packets of cigarettes, and he observes the immoral goings on of the US army in their clubs. He is himself courted as an attractive cooperative partner, and the Americans

offer him a job as an engineer in an armaments factory. Following these experiences, Dietrich leaves the American zone and asks Kuz'min for permission to return to the Soviet zone – he has brought three more engineers with him who could not bear life under the US administration. The commander grants permission for them to come, Dietrich is reinstated as mayor. The Soviets thus succeed, without any kind of coercion, solely because of their moral authority and powers of persuasion, as well as due to their superior social order in the competition between the systems, as this 'voting with the feet' illustrates. Shortly after his return, Dietrich receives the patents (which were found and secured in the meantime) from Kuz'min, but now voluntarily makes them available to the Soviets. He explains that the Germans cannot remain neutral between the two worlds which now clash at the Elbe, and that he has chosen the Soviet side.

Alongside local self-administration, the Soviets are dedicated to re-educating the Germans, portrayed as rebuilding the education system in order to secure the future of Germany, embodied by its youth. In a newly-opened school, Commander Kuz'min holds a passionate speech against a Nazi leaflet circulated by one of the pupils, Walter Schmetau, and challenges the pupils, teachers and military officers present to tear up their copies. However, he deals with the boy Walter tolerantly and sympathetically because he assumes that he has been 'poisoned' by the National Socialistic ideology and has previously had no chance to become acquainted with other ideas. This becomes obvious when the commander recites a love poem by Heinrich Heine, and Walter says that he has never heard of him. When Walter says Germany should reach as far as the Volga, Kuz'min counters by asserting that his country has fought a defensive war. He admits that the Red Army is now standing at the Elbe, but states that the Soviet Union should not extend as far as that. Once things have settled down, the Russians should live on the Volga, and the Germans on the Elbe. Not only by re-educating the Germans, but also by enforcing justice, the Soviet occupiers work to stamp out fascism, by preventing the escape to the USA of the war criminal, Schrank, who had disguised himself as an anti-fascist who had just been released from prison.

By contrast, US policies towards the German population differ completely from those of the USSR. The representatives of the leading Western power do not care the least about the destinies, wants and needs of the Germans. The USA tries to prohibit the activities of leftist parties in its occupied zone, even though this contradicts the agreements with the USSR. With a suspicious-looking Social Democrat, they collude for his party to open an Eastern office in the Soviet zone, to prevent the merger of the left-wing parties and to undermine trust in the communists. In terms of their economic system the USA does not have the interests of Germany at heart, only its own predominantly economic advantages. The Americans in the film are equipped with visual attributes that are traditionally associated with capitalists in Soviet films and posters: they are corpulent and smoke cigars.²¹

Especially General MacDermott and his wife are the representatives of this grim side of America. MacDermott dismisses the fate of Germany as of no interest to him and plays the stock market to make money. His wife combines caricature-like exaggeration

with the worst traits that are attributed to the Americans by the Soviets. Her mask-like, exaggerated smile identifies her outwardly as a stereotypical enemy. In her vanity, Mrs MacDermott had a German artist paint a portrait of her, but is too mean to pay a decent price for it. Time and again she greedily encourages her husband and other representatives of the US army to extract the maximum profit from Germany.

American immorality and ruthlessness in pursuit of American interests are shown as a general phenomenon of American government policy. Examples include the reference to the extremely unfair conditions of trade between the Americans and the Germans; second, the thoughtlessness with which the Americans deforest the area around Altenstadt so that they can sell timber to the British; and third, the cunning with which they try to obtain knowledge about new technology. For it is they who steal the patents from the German engineer, Dietrich, with the aim of exploiting them for military ends. Besides this, they do everything to try to ensure that the armaments industry – and, as a part of it, the optical industry – starts up again as soon as possible in their occupied zone. Furthermore the Americans try to take advantage of the capabilities of specialists in the interest of their army, even if they have previously served the Nazi regime. In doing so the USA is projected as not unlike the former mutual fascist enemy. The USA is characterised as having a criminal and immoral regime. By implication US General MacDermott is portrayed as being similarly minded to Hitler. The General has adopted Hitler's line that soldiers have to obey and not question his orders, because they are not asked for their opinion anyway. The alleged closeness of the USA to 'fascism' is particularly persuasive from an ideological point of view, when – according to the official Soviet readings of Marxism-Leninism – fascism is a version of capitalism or even imperialism, and is promoted by capitalist economic structures (particularly through the large companies and their interests).²²

The close relationship of the US leadership with National Socialist war criminals is embodied by the attractive Mrs Sherwood, who initially appears to be an angel on the inside, just as she is on the outside. She claims to have fled Germany during the Nazi era and to have been an opponent of the Nazis. She says that she is currently searching for her father, an anti-fascist who had to stay in Germany and from whom she has not received news in years. In the course of the film Sherwood shows her inner qualities to be a façade. The first person to become suspicious after having been initially dazzled by her beauty is Commander Kuz'min, when Sherwood finds her father astonishingly quickly and requests a passport for him. He finds out that she is trying to smuggle the war criminal Schrank, who stole the patents from Professor Dietrich, into the USA. With help from the American guard post on the bridge over the Elbe, Kuz'min has Schrank arrested and it is thus that he secures the stolen patents. In the case of Sherwood, who is not under the command of the US Army, he proves just as powerless as US Commander James Hill, who agrees to let her leave for the USA by aeroplane. When the aeroplane takes off Sherwood finally reveals herself to be an agent for the US secret service. She threatens Hill with grave consequences for his attempt to thwart her assignment. She also wants to have him punished for his pro-Soviet attitudes.

Ljubov' Orlova, who played Mrs Sherwood, later explained that she tried to portray her with a spiritual void and monetary greed hidden behind breathtaking beauty. She hesitated to play this repulsive role.²³ As a rule, Orlova played commendable Soviet citizens, or rather communists, and therefore tended to embody Soviet role models.

Alongside the political-economic aspects in *Meeting on the Elbe*, culture also plays an important role in the incipient confrontation between the systems. In Aleksandrov's film, the US Army does not find culture a possession worth protecting, but a commodity. Besides, the American representatives do not know how to appreciate cultural values because of their lack of education. Thus General MacDermott confiscates a painting at the beginning of the film, whose theme – the ancient story of the 'Rape of Europa' – is completely unfamiliar to him and whose value he cannot estimate. The painting has to be explained to him by a German, who tells him that this is a very famous, precious Italian painting – perhaps an allusion to Titian's 'Rape of Europa' (with which the piece exhibits great similarity) and likewise to the USA robbing Europe.

The Soviets on the other hand re-build the Heine Memorial with support from anti-fascist forces; it had of course been destroyed by the National Socialists because Heine was Jewish. During the beginning of the film the head of the Heine Memorial lies on the floor behind barbed wire, not only symbolic of the fate of Europe's Jews at the hand of the Nazis, but also a code for the oppression of free speech and arts in National Socialist Germany; later on in the plot the restored Heine Memorial is unveiled. The fact that a Heine statue was specifically chosen for the film is no accident: Heinrich Heine was stylised by the Soviet cultural and educational policy in the Soviet Occupation Zone to be one of the most important protagonists of 'progressive' German literature.²⁴

In addition to that, one could also understand the re-building of the Heine Memorial as Soviet encouragement of the Germans to value to their own high culture – unlike the Americans, who impose their popular and consumer culture in the forms of jazz and cigarettes.

Where popular culture is concerned, unlike their US antagonists in the film, the Soviet military do not have much of a role to play. The members of the Soviet army appear to have no, or almost no, free time; at least they are very rarely shown during moments of relaxation. In his few free moments Commander Kuz'min does not recuperate, but learns English, he emulates the Soviet ideal of perpetual self-education (although perhaps with the ulterior motive that this could be useful for his love for Jeanette Sherwood).

In Aleksandrov's film, the representatives of the USA and USSR are also depicted in stark contrast to each other in terms of gender. On one side we find the Soviet officers and soldiers, who mostly carry out their military duty and subordinate their personal happiness to the reconstruction of Germany. Even when Commander Kuz'min harbours fleeting affection for Mrs Sherwood, he does not completely lose focus. As he realises after a short while that the American he adores is up to no good, he intervenes

and stops her from carrying out her dastardly plans. All other Red Army soldiers shown in the film have no visible private lives. Nor do they have girlfriends in Germany, nor do any families at home in the Soviet Union ever enter the picture. They treat the German women respectfully. When the US Commander speaks to him about his lack of a private life and asks when he can take the time to *live*, Commander Kuz'min claims he does not miss anything: it all depends on how one defines 'to live'. The fact that he allowed himself a temporary infatuation with Sherwood certainly qualifies this statement a little. While the gender aspect largely remains a blank space with regard to the Red Army soldiers, gender relations in the occupied American zone are depicted in the murkiest of colours. The German women are treated as merchandise and sexual objects by the Americans, and therefore are not asked for their views. Two scenes portray this particularly clearly: at one point a US soldier labels a woman who is standing in a queue on the street as war loot by drawing a cross on her coat with chalk (the painting which was confiscated as looted art had been labelled with the same symbol). Elsewhere we are shown a sign at the entrance of an American club for soldiers, stating that non-American men are barred from entry, while women of any nationality are allowed in, provided they can produce evidence of political reliability and confirmation that they are not suffering from any sexually transmitted diseases. Subsequently the camera penetrates into the club and shows the US soldiers dancing wildly and boisterously with German women. The fact that it is jazz being played in the club, a musical genre that was considered as the epitome of decadence in the post-war Soviet Union, stigmatises this place even more.²⁵ Captain Tommy even has pin-up girls on the windscreen of his Jeep. The gender relations in the American occupied zone are depicted as utterly immoral.²⁶ In addition, one scene in the club portrays the American Army as a stronghold of racism: a black man is thrown out and kicked. American racism was also a constant in Soviet representations of the USA at that time. The most well-known example of this is the 1936 film *The Circus*. Also filmed by Grigorii Aleksandrov, it tells the story of a white American who is discriminated against in the USA because of her black baby, and her emigration to the USSR where they are welcomed. This American was also played by Ljubov' Orlova.²⁷

The contrast represented here between the occupational powers has to be relativised insofar as the Americans in the film – just as in other Soviet representations of the Western superpower – do not appear homogeneous. On the contrary, *Meeting on the Elbe* shows that there are 'two Americas' in the USA. On one side stand the political and military elite, which embody all values that the Soviet values are against: warmongering, greed, uncontrolled sexuality and the consumption of alcohol. General MacDermott and his wife, as well as the constantly inebriated Captain Tommy, are the representatives of this America. On the other side are the 'ordinary Americans', who either experience oppression, racism and exploitation themselves (such as the black man who is thrown out of the club) or embrace values which match the Soviets': friendly cooperation with the Soviet Union, social equality and freedom from exploitation. The main representative in the film of this 'good' America is Major James Hill, who in the course of the film experiences a considerable development from an

'ordinary' to a 'good' American. This becomes most apparent in two key scenes. When he meets Kuz'min at the beginning of the film at the encounter between the US army and the Red Army at the Elbe, he suggests exchanging a dollar note and a rouble note in memory of this moving moment. In each case the Soviet citizen and the American citizen write a few symbolic words on it, expressing their value system. Hill, as a Capitalist, writes 'open-sesame' on the dollar bill, Kuz'min, as a Socialist, writes that friendship cannot be bought, and is invaluable.²⁸ Hill and Kuz'min later become friends. During their regular chats over a cigarette, they transcend the borders of the systems. Hill is led to reconsider his own views, and becomes a friend of the Soviet Union. He was a teacher before the war, therefore a member of the intelligentsia and – according to the teachings of Marxism-Leninism – capable of forming an alliance with the working class. At the end of the film Hill asks his friend Kuz'min to briefly return the dollar bill that he had given Kuz'min. He amends his 'open-sesame' with the words, 'Turns out there is a Truth in the world that is stronger than the dollar'. Symbolically he has thus espoused the Socialist value system. The film shows that such an attitude was considered undesirable in the USA: shortly before this scene Hill has been dismissed from the military upon the instigation of Mrs Sherwood and will be sent back to the USA, where he has to answer to McCarthy's commission for 'un-American activities'. Aside from that, as already mentioned, he cannot prevent the departure of secret service agent Sherwood. Therefore he does not manage to live up to his own ideals in the USA – at least not yet. With more of a long-term perspective this is developed in the film as a vision of the future, when Kuz'min asks his friend to do everything that he can to ensure that they do not one day meet as enemies. Hill promises to do all within his power. The scene ends with a firm handshake between the protagonists, which seals the friendship between the Soviet and American peoples, echoing the other variants of the handshake symbolism in the film, which refers to the German–Soviet friendship and to the cooperation of all classes.

In spite of its chiefly caricature-like, exaggerated, one-dimensional figures, *Meeting on the Elbe* is noticeably more powerful than other Soviet works of this time. It is much more dynamic and vivid than, for example, Mikhail Chiaureli's film *The Vow* from the same year, which is stiff in its canonical form and is considered to be a cardinal example of film production during high Stalinism. Stalin completely takes centre stage here,²⁹ while the dictator in *Meeting on the Elbe* is not even present in the form of a poster or a sculpture – only pictures of Lenin are to be found.

Even so, *Meeting on the Elbe* was not released without some debate: when it was pre-viewed by the Committee for Arts at the Ministry for Cinematography, the film initially encountered strong reservations because of its comparatively sophisticated characterisation of the German population. Its approval for distribution in the USSR only came after the personal intervention of Stalin.³⁰ This is typical for that time, as *Meeting on the Elbe* emerged during a period which is famous in Soviet cinematography as 'the lean years of film' (1945–53). The reason for this was the typically excessive regulation of high Stalinism, consisting of censorship measures and directives.³¹ These restrictive conditions forced film production to plummet to a

unique low in Soviet film history: for instance, in 1949 only 13 feature films were produced altogether, of which only six appeared in cinemas.³² A reason for this decline in production was Stalin's demand that he be shown all films as the supreme censor of film production, but he carried out his self-imposed obligations to see and judge these films increasingly irregularly with advancing age.³³ After a special previewing of *Meeting on the Elbe* by the Central Committee of the CPSU, the dictator claimed that the film had been made with an unusual amount of expertise; this finally assured its release.³⁴

The film impressed even by international standards. Rightly, Caute has claimed that it had a higher standard than the American films of the time referring to the East–West conflict.³⁵ *Meeting on the Elbe* could certainly not demonstrate its quality on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The film was shown only in Socialist 'Brotherlands' such as the GDR and Czechoslovakia, but not in the USA.³⁶ It did receive several national and international awards, albeit all from Socialist states.³⁷ It could therefore only contribute in its own country – and in the Socialist Camp – to strengthening the legitimization of Soviet policy in the Cold War, achieving mobilisation effects there. In this respect the impact of this film remained solely limited to the USSR and its satellites. Even if this reduces its relevance in the context of the competition between the systems overall, *Meeting on the Elbe* can be considered as one of the most important Soviet films from the Cold War era.

Notes

- [1] Nye, *Soft Power*, x.
- [2] See e.g. Buffet, *Die vier Besatzungsmächte und die Kultur*.
- [3] Kenez, 'Films of the Second World War'; Schattenberg, 'Als die Geschichte laufen lernte'.
- [4] Gjunter and Dobrenko, *Sotsrealisticheskii kanon*.
- [5] Turovskaja, 'The 1930s and 1940s'.
- [6] The boundaries between feature films and documentaries were not fixed at this time in the Soviet Union. Kenez, 'Films of the Second World War', 150.
- [7] Aleksandrov was inter alia co-director of the film classic *Battleship Potemkin* (*Bronenosets Potëmkin*) and *Strike* (*Stachka*) (both 1925). Cf. 'Grigory Aleksandrov', in Sea Gull Films.
- [8] Engel, *Geschichte des russischen und sowjetischen Films*, 76.
- [9] The films that became the most famous were: *The Circus* (*Tsirk*) (1936), *Volga-Volga* (*Volga-Volga*) (1938) and *Tanya* (*Svetlyi put'*, 1940). See Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 643, footnote 63. See Aleksandrov's film comedies: Hänsgen, 'Film als Erbe anderer Medien'.
- [10] 'Tisse, Eduard K', in *The BFI Companion*, 210f.
- [11] His opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* (*Ledi Makbet Mtsenskogo uezda*) was strongly criticised in 1936 in a Pravda article entitled 'Chaos Rather than Music'. This signified a serious blow to Shostakovich's career as a composer. Cf. Redepennig, 'Chronist seiner Zeit', 8. During his life the artist obtained however more than 12 Stalin prizes for his compositions, so certainly received official honours from the party state. Cf. Holm, 'Das Schreckliche ist des Schönen Anfang', 40.
- [12] 'Orlova, Lyubov P', in *The BFI Companion*, 125; Engel, *Geschichte des russischen und sowjetischen Films*, 81, 84.
- [13] Engel, *Geschichte des russischen und sowjetischen Films*, 99.

- [14] In Germany, several places by the name of Altenstadt exist, but they are situated in southern Germany, not near the Elbe. The actual encounter between the armies was in Torgau.
- [15] Nye, *Soft Power*, x, 49f.
- [16] They bear the messages: 'The Americans will never forget the heroic actions of the Russians' and 'A salute from the Americans to the bold Russian allies'.
- [17] Cf. the results of the Potsdam conference: Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg*, 44–7.
- [18] Stöver, *Der Kalte Krieg*, 73–5. Zhdanov had already formulated the 'Two-Camp-Theory' for the first time in 1934. Cf. Hartmann, 'Sowjetische "Leitkultur"', 554f.
- [19] Revealingly, only the release of political prisoners and not the release of Jews from the concentration camps is shown in *Meeting on the Elbe*. This is all the more remarkable as the Red Army liberated Auschwitz. In a film which should show that the Soviet occupational power incorporated all population groups except Nazis into the administrative work, and which works so stringently with documentary elements, this is a very meaningful gap. That is connected with the fact that the Holocaust played a marginal role in Soviet discourse of the past and has been a taboo for decades since the immediate post-war years. Highlighting individual ethnic or cultural groups from the 'united Soviet people' was considered as 'separatism'. Cf. de Kegel, 'Der Zweite Weltkrieg und der Holocaust', 52f.
- [20] Ahbe et al., 'Der Handschlag', 312–18.
- [21] Cf. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, 202–4.
- [22] For the definition of the term Fascism in the communist movement, coined by Dimitroff and Stalin, cf. Classen, 'Feindbild Faschismus', 131–4.
- [23] Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 139.
- [24] Nothnagle, *Building the East German Myth*, 39.
- [25] Hänsgen, *Film als Erbe anderer Medien*, 189–91. As late as 1934 Aleksandrov filmed the 'jazz comedy' *Moscow Laughs* (*Vesëlye rebiata*) with compositions by Isaak Dunaevskii, and interpretations of the most famous Soviet jazz musician of the time, Leonid Utësov. In the film, jazz played an important and consistently positive role. For further detail concerning the composer Dunaevskii, who created the Soviet mass song, cf. Stadelmann, *Isaak Dunaevskij*. Dunaevskii's works were strongly influenced by the Viennese operetta and British, as well as American light music (jazz, foxtrot), for which he was occasionally treated with hostility in the USSR. Overall he was certainly considered to be an important protagonist in Soviet cultural life and was a Stalin prize winner.
- [26] Similar representations of the gender aspect regarding the USA can also be found in Soviet magazines under the column 'The Customs of Others'. Particularly in the satirical magazine *Crocodile* (*Krokodil*), representations of the USA were printed that were there to show that the gender relations in the USA are characterised by profit seeking, decadence and immorality. The Soviet family, shaped by true love and respect, was opposed to that, which is missing in the film. Cf. Riabov, 'Ich navy'.
- [27] Engel, *Geschichte des russischen und sowjetischen Films*, 77.
- [28] Hill notes: 'Take this American open-sesame, for which there are no limits in the world'. Kuz'min says: 'This ten rouble note is worth more than one million, because one cannot buy the friendship of soldiers with any amount of money'.
- [29] Engel, *Geschichte des russischen und sowjetischen Films*, 73, 98, 337.
- [30] Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 141.
- [31] For multi-staged authorization processes, see for more details: Kenez, 'Soviet Cinema in the Age of Stalin', 68.
- [32] In 1951 Soviet production sank to a record low of nine feature films. In comparison, 128 feature films had been produced in the USSR in 1930, in 1940 there were still 46 (Engel, *Geschichte des russischen und sowjetischen Films*, 332). 432 films were shot in the USA in 1951. Cf. Caute,

- The Dancer Defects*, 641, footnote 641; 644, footnote 93 gives slightly different numbers. Caute cites this statistical data from MacDonald, 'Soviet Cinema'.
- [33] Engel, *Geschichte des russischen und sowjetischen Films*, 68. In addition to that were the restrictive regulations of the central committee, such as the decree of 4 September 1946. Cf. Caute, *The Dancer Defects*: 119, 125, footnote 30.
- [34] Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 141.
- [35] *Ibid.*, 141f.
- [36] *Meeting on the Elbe* appeared in the cinema in the GDR in 1949, only three months later than in the USSR. Cf. 'Begegnung an der Elbe', in *Lexikon des Internationalen Films*, vol. 1, 260. It was shown in 1949 and 1950 in Czechoslovakia. Cf. 'Meeting on the Elba [sic]', in kinoglaz.ru. For *Meeting on the Elbe* and cinemas in the USA see Caute, *The Dancer Defects*, 142.
- [37] In the USSR itself the director Grigorii Aleksandrov, the cameraman Eduard Tissé, as well as the actors Mikhail Nazvanov and Ljubov' Orlova received the first-class Stalin prize in 1950 for their contribution to the *Meeting on the Elbe*. Outside of the Soviet Union the film became a prize winner at the international festivals in Bratislava and Gotvaldov in 1949, and in 1950 it received an award at the festival of Mariánské Lázně. Cf. 'Meeting on the Elba', in kinoglaz.ru.

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