

Document Citation

Title	Eine Liebe in Deutschland (A love in Germany)
Author(s)	Hy Hollinger
Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1983 Sep 14
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Eine Liebe in Deutschland (A love in germany), Wajda, Andrzej, 1983

Eine Liebe In Deutschland VARIETY
9/14/83

(A Love in Germany)

(W. GERMAN-FRENCH-COLOR)

Venice, Sept. 7.

A coproduction between CCC-Filmkunst, Berlin, and Gaumont-TF1 Films Production-Stand'art, Paris. Produced by Artur Brauner; executive producer, Peter Hahne; associate producer, Emmanuel Schlumberger. Features entire cast. Directed by Andrzej Wajda. Screenplay, Boleslaw Michalek, Agnieszka Holland, Wajda, based on Rolf Hochhuth's novel with same title; camera (color), Igor Luther; music, Michel Legrand; sets, Allan Starski, Goetz Heymann, Juergen Henze; editor, Halina Prugar-Ketling; costumes, Ingrid Zore, Krystyna Zachwatowicz-Wajda. Reviewed at Venice Film Fest (Competition), Sept. 6, '83. Running time: 132 MINS.

Paulina Kropp	Hanna Schygulla
Maria Wyler	Marie-Christine Barrault
Mayer	Armin Muller-Stahl
Elsbeth Schnittgens	Elisabeth Trissenaar
Wiktorczyk	Daniel Olbrychski
Stanislaw Zasada	Piotr Lysak
Karl Wyler	Gerard Desarthe
Dr. Borg	Bernhard Wicki
Schulze	Ralf Wolter
The Narrator	Otto Sander
Klaus	Ben Becker
Melchior	Sigfrit Steiner
Frau Melchior	Erika Wackernagel
Martha	Dorothea Moritz
Old Zinngruber	Juergen von Alten

One of the inside favorites to win the Golden Lion at Venice, Andrzej Wajda's "A Love in Germany" is the Polish director's second film abroad since winning the Golden Palm in Cannes in 1981 for "Man of Iron" in between, he made "Danton" (1982) (also unspooled at Venice in the "Venice by Night" section). In this regard, one should state at the outset that Wajda's two features abroad are clearly for and about Poland, employing an exiled team of Polish screenplay writers, actors, and technicians. In this case they are Boleslaw Michalek and Agnieszka Holland (scripters), Daniel Olbrychski and Piotr Lysak (actors), and Krystyna Zachwatowicz (costumes), plus Slovak-born cameraman Igor Luther (with whom Wajda communicates in Polish). There is even a short scene in the film featuring a dialogue between the two Polish actors in Polish, is undoubtedly meant for his countrymen in reference to contemporary Poland.

That Wajda is able to make both a commercial film on one hand, while loading it with relevant symbols and meaningful nuances of every ilk and gender on the other, confirms his status as one of modern cinema's great directors. Consider the hidden messages in Jean Renoir's "The Rules of the Game" (France at end of the 1930s) and Carl Theodor Dreyer's "Day of Wrath" (Denmark in the wartime 1940s) — both directors had to leave the country shortly thereafter — and one can easily "read into" Wajda's two post-martial-law films, "Danton" and "A Love in Germany," without too much difficulty. The only prerequisite is perhaps the good fortune of having seen and appreciated the director's brilliant "Man of Marble" (1976) and "Man of Iron" (1981), a pair of political statements on (so to speak) the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Poland as a nation. Danton was, indeed, a Lech Walesa before the guillotine, just as Stanislaw Zasada in "A Love in Germany" surely predicts a dim future for the rebellious Pole under a military dictatorship.

Nevertheless, "A Love in Germany" contains enough Rolf Hochhuth to bear the German writer's stamp-of-approval as well. It's a tale, too, of Germany's own agony under a regime that brooked no breaking of inhuman racist laws, particularly in the middle of the Second World War when victory was still a tangible dream for the

(Continued on page 26)

Eine Liebe In Deutschland

population. The setting is a small town on the Swiss border, and the incident really happened as recorded in Hochhuth's documented nonfiction bestseller. A young Polish POW had an affair with a German fruit-and-vegetable shopkeeper, which was reported to the authorities and resulted in a mock-trial (an attempt to Aryanize the lad to save his life), followed by a fumbling execution in a stone-quarry. Indeed, as Hochhuth describes the case, the whole story is painfully and tragically characterized by one blunder and non sequitur after another — something like the hanging of Mary Surratt during the hysteria following the Lincoln assassination.

Hanna Schygulla plays the shopkeeper, too much a dumb-blond type and too little a middle-aged and sex-starved victim of circumstances, but adequate for the role all the same. Piotr Lysak is the POW, too green-behind-the-ears and callow for the part, but naive and vulnerable enough to win sympathy. The ladies of the village who accelerate the tragic course of events are along the lines of Shakespeare's busybodies of Windsor, yet they too fill the bill pretty much as one might expect. Then the boy is arrested — and the story really gets off the ground with the introduction of the male characters: stormtrooper Armin Muller-Stahl, country doctor Bernhard Wicki, and military attache Ralf Wolter. While Schygulla ventures on her own Way of the Cross by becoming an object of ridicule in the village and is imprisoned for her crime of consorting with a Slav as a German of the super-class, the young POW is offered his life if he agrees to pass a rigged Aryan-test.

He refuses — and is led to his own crucifixion. To say more would perhaps rob the viewer of fully appreciating Wajda's masterful orchestration of the ending in word, image, and montage.

Muller-Stahl gives the performance of his career since leaving East for West Germany five years ago. The hanging-scene matches the guillotine-scene in "Danton" in dramatic impact, but surpasses it in depth of emotion. And the framing of the story by introducing into the Hochhuth original a narrator from today has its vindication in the closing scene: an aged Schygulla mourns the mistakes of her past before a tv-screen on which Lech Walesa proclaims the Gdansk agreement during a strike heard around the world. — Holl.