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## **Abraham's Gold** (WEST GERMAN)

*Variety* 5/16/90

**Munich** A Futura/Filmverlag release of an Aviata Film, A.& H. Rimbach, Pro-ject Film im Filmverlag der Autoren, Adanos Film and ZDF. Produced by Alena and Herbert Rimbach. Directed by Jörg Graser. Screenplay, Graser; camera (color), Henning Stegmüller; editor, Helga Borsche; sound, Günter Knorr; costumes, Petra Kray. Reviewed at Arri theater, Munich, April 27, 1990. (In Cannes Film Festival, Un Certain Regard section.) Running time: 98 MIN.

Bärbel . . . . . Hanna Schygulla  
Karl Lechner . . . . . Günther-Maria Halmer  
Annamirl . . . . . Daniela Schötz  
Hunzinger . . . . . Robert Dietl  
Lechner's mother . . . . . Maria Singer  
Mayor . . . . . Karl Friedrich  
Priest . . . . . Otto Tausig

■ **"Abraham's Gold" is an anti-fascist heimat (homeland) film, genre dealing with German communal life and patriotic traditions, the main theme of which is a concealed Nazi past and latent anti-Semitism in a rural Bavarian village.**

Despite a first-rate cast and excellent script, pic is a downer, with theatrical possibilities limited to the German-lingo territories. Offshore, best bet is tv, the arthouse and fest circuits.

Film begins with the return of an aging hippie, Bärbel (Hanna Schygulla), who left the village to join the flower children movement in the 1960s. Her unconventional appearance and behavior starkly contrasts the staid, pious villagers, and she receives a hostile welcome from her innkeeper father Hunzinger, who has raised her 14-year-old daughter Annamirl.

The villagers are unaware that Hunzinger, a stern advocate of law and order, was a guard at the Auschwitz death camp in Poland. While Bärbel takes her daughter on excursions nearby trying to explain why she abandoned the village in search of freedom, Hunzinger and his friend Karl Lechner,

the beer deliverer, drive to Poland, where the innkeeper had years ago buried gold fillings from the teeth of murdered Jews.

Lechner's aged mother discovers some of the gold fillings and suspects they are from the death camp victims. Lechner, saying he was born in 1938, tells his mother Auschwitz means nothing to him, until he learns from her he is a Jew himself. She was not his real mother but a former employee in a Jewish household, who had saved him from the Nazis when the family was deported.

Lechner confronts Hunzinger, breaks with him and calls him a murderer. Hunzinger, fearing that he will be exposed and prosecuted by the Israelis, launches a tirade against Jews and forces Annamirl to agree to tell police that Lechner had sexually molested her.

Daniela Schötz as the helpless victim of her dominating Nazi grandfather shows impressive talent. In a welcome return to the German screen, Schygulla is convincing in the hippie role. Under Graser's direction, Günther-Maria Halmer gives a superb performance as Karl, the naive friend of the unrepentant Nazi Hunzinger, masterfully played by noted stage actor Robert Dietl.

Classic composers Bach, Grieg, Vivaldi, Franck and Johann Strauss supplied the music for the score. Credits, especially Henning Stegmüller's poetic lensing of the Bavarian countryside, are tops.

— *Kind*.