

Document Citation

Title	Andi Engel talks to Jean-Marie Straub
Author(s)	Andi Engel
Source	<i>Cinemantics</i>
Date	1/1/1970
Type	interview
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	15
Subjects	Straub, Jean-Marie (1933), France Huillet, Danièle
Film Subjects	Der Bräutigam, die Komödiantin und der Zuhälter (The bridegroom, the actress, and the pimp), Straub, Jean-Marie, 1968 Othon (Eyes do not want to close at all times or Perhaps one day Rome will permit herself to choose in her turn), Straub, Jean-Marie, 1969 Machorka-Muff, Straub, Jean-Marie, 1962 En rachachant, Straub, Jean-Marie, 1983 Nicht versöhnt ode Es hilft nur Gewalt wo Gewalt herrscht (Not reconciled), Straub, Jean-Marie, 1962 Einleitung zu Arnold Schönbergs Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene (Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg's "Accompaniment to a cinematographic scene"), Straub,

Chronik der Anna Magdalena Bach (Chronicle of Anna Magdalena Bach), Straub, Jean-Marie, 1967

Geschichtsunterricht, Straub, Jean-Marie, 1972

Aug. reported in no. 1 of Cinema
CINEMANTICS, no. 1, Jan. 1970

Andi Engel

talks
to

JEAN-MARIE STRAUB

Note.

The particular style of the interview has necessitated a particular style of translation -- a certain fluency of language was needed, an obliteration of the differences between quoted and unquoted speech, and a continuity of method, peculiar to Straub, which places equal emphasis on 'major' and 'minor' factors in a film -- these facets of Straub's thought, we hope, will be revealed to the careful reader. Towards the end of the text, when the conversation is warming up, John Ford gets confused with John Wayne -- no importance should be attached to this.

Explanatory brackets have been used to introduce some of the personalities Straub mentions.

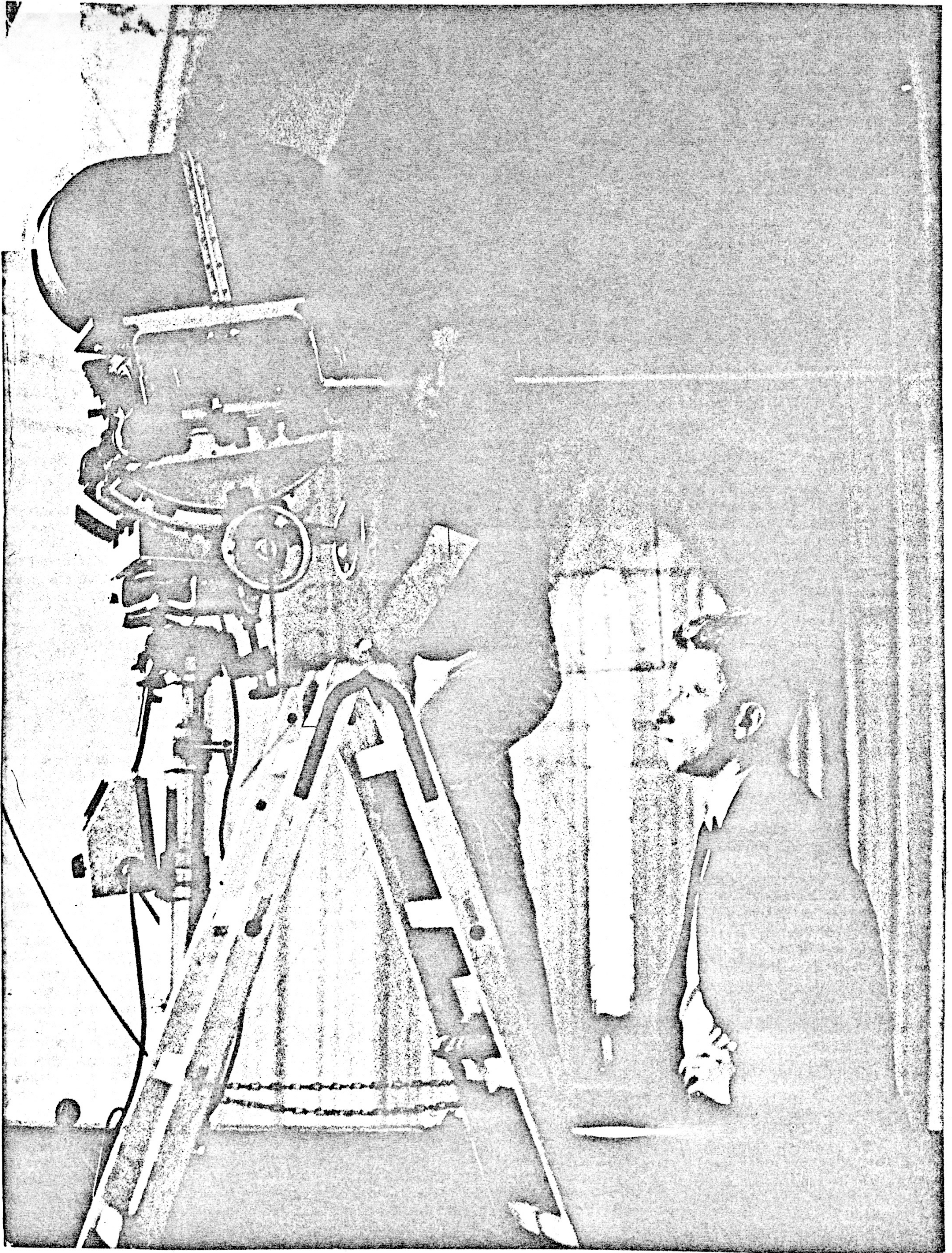
Eng: In 1958 you went to East Germany and visited various towns connected with Bach.

Str: Eisenach, Arnstadt, Erfurt, Weimar, Dresden, Leipzig, Muelhausen yes, and not only because of the towns, which in the end are not shown in the film. It was there I understood that one couldn't make the film in the original surroundings at all, because these have been altered in the nineteenth century. The Thomas school, where Bach lived for thirty years, was torn down around 1900. The Thomas church in Leipzig was altered by an organ in a horrible neo-gothic style ... and at the same time I spoke to people, such as Neumann from the Bach Archive in Leipzig, and we started collecting manuscripts. The things you see in the film we found in the State Library (Unter den Linden, East Berlin) and in the Bach Archive - we copied them on microfilm, ten times as much as we left in the film. Danièle accompanied me now and then and in between went to Paris to get some money. In the meantime I went to see Boell. It was like this: we were in Paris - basically we could have made the film in 1959. It might nearly have worked

out that way -- we were short of 100,000 marks. If we could have found 100,000 cash, then Schoenger would have risked the rest. Originally we had calculated it at 400,000, which it finally came to. We had finished the script back in '58, and then I was looking for someone who -- I thought it was necessary to take the texts from the eighteenth century -- who could have helped me modernise the texts a bit without completely killing the language. And then I got to know someone in Paris, who was a friend of a certain Boell, I hadn't read anything by him yet, and went to see him. Boell then read the texts -- in the meantime I had been to Tuebingen and Marburg where most of the manuscripts and scores which are not 'over there' (in East Germany) are contained in the Prussian Kulturbesitz (Art Treasures) -- then Boell read them and thought he wouldn't change a thing ... he suggested I should put 'to appeal' in place of 'vozieret' -- two little things -- and he said, I find it very good, I wouldn't change a thing in it. Then I took heart and fought for it, determined to keep this language. But that was of course the difficulty, as it still is now, because everybody told me, nobody can understand that, and then I slowly realized that it was an essential part of the film ... it isn't really a cultural film about Bach, but a film where the language is just as important as a journey of discovery in his mind, as important as the music itself.

Eng: Maybe we could go back to your first film.

Str: Yes, well then it came to nothing in '59. In that year we sent it to Bonn (to apply for a government production grant) and later, when things went wrong, in '59 ... That is why I went to U.F.A. in '58 ... I tried everything from the small distributor to UFA. The only thing I achieved then ... Schonger only shrugged his shoulders, and that was not very wise, because now we have received nothing more from Kirchner - now the film



Straub, Danièle Huillet and the Mitchell.

exists. There was a certain Ehrt at Pallas (a production company) in Frankfurt, and he knew Abich. Abich was very interested in the film and tried time after time - Abich was from Filmaufbau in Munich, and he's now a television director in Bremen - Anyway, through Abich I met Ehrt, and we had long discussions; he told me, 20,000 mark guarantee from the distributors and we will take on the publicity ourselves. They would have brought out the film in a big way. He had even read the scenario properly, and thought, we won't risk more than 20 in distribution guarantee, but the film is of enough interest to us, because it might just be a success. Then Ehrt crashed into a tree in Switzerland and then the Pallas company slowly went bankrupt. Then later Abich tried Bavarian television -- they had a series called 'Portraits of Musicians' -- they would have to tell us how it should be done before they could even think of financing it -- then they showed us a thing where Rossini was preparing tourndos and then Abich said, they are not really the sort of people we want. And so we were sitting there, and it didn't come to anything after all with TV. In the meantime I had read a short story by Boell in 'Welt der Arbeit' called 'City Diary' (Hauptstaedisches journal) ... no, that was later. At first I read a book of his called 'Billiards at 9.30', and I liked that, and immediately wanted to turn it into a film. This was the second project. The first film we made, made, Machorka Muff, is really the third project. By now the Minister of Culture in Duesseldorf, a certain Frau Schmuecker, had rejected a grant four times. Now DEFA (East German State Film) said it was clearly a documentary, and too expensive as a documentary, while at the same time we received a letter from Schmuecker, saying it was clearly a fiction film, and according to the rules they wouldn't finance any fiction film. This was a bit of a joke ... because later they financed 'Brot der fruehen Jahre' for instance. Then I wanted to film 'Billiards at 9,30' and handed it in again, with Schonger as producer once more -- I handed it into Bonn and it was rejected -- at the end seventeen people were reading the script in Bonn ...

Eng: This version of 'Billiards ...' is not the same as the one you made later?

Str: It is.

Eng: But you told me, the first time we met in Munich, that the only thing you did when you still couldn't start shooting was constantly cut out scenes that weren't absolutely necessary.

he said, if it is like that, then I will have to think it over until after Easter, and then I'll give you my answer. That was during the Easter week. And after Easter Monday I phoned him and he said, no, not with original sound. You are going to come to me afterwards and say you are not happy with the sound and you want post-synchronization, that will cost me twice as much. Then I said, if you like I'll sign here and now that if I don't like the sound you can do anything you want with the film, and he said, no, and besides, I won't have any time, I have an order from the Ministry of the Interior, and it's essential that I be there, when you are shooting. I said, yes, but you have Van der Heide -- but that was shortly after Machorka Muff -- (I have just jumped a bit) -- where we used him as production manager, and got along with him quite well -- yes, I know him all right, but I would still like to be there. Without me there you won't make the film.

Eng: When you were taking a strong position about original sound in the beginning of the 60's...

Str: Yes, they all thought I was crazy.

Eng: Where did you get your assurance, to film with original sound at all cost?

Str: The films which at that time made the strongest impression on me, such as "Man of Aran", relied precisely on sound, and on original sound.

Eng: Were the Leacock films in existence at that time?

Str: Well I hadn't seen any. I remember I read about Leacock, the first time... that was in Téléràma, after "Unreconciled", then two of his films were shown in Paris, Eddie Sachs and...

Eng: You should be quite pleased today, because when someone like Polanski after Rosemary's Baby says that "he doubts whether one can make films at all without original sound..."

Str: That is my position, but Rossellini did it too, and Renoir in particular. The most beautiful films in existence, are the first sound films by Renoir, not only because they speak so beautifully with southern French accents, but because of the fact that it is original sound. For me one of the ten most beautiful films is "La nuit du carrefour" by Renoir the thriller taken from Simenon's novel, ... anyway the film is one of the best thrillers in

follow that. But if it is there and comes in by itself, then one shouldn't hide it. The idea of using original sound -- with the Bach project I became convinced of the necessity of original sound, since there I understood that it only made sense if you recorded everything together with the picture. And the other projects grew out of the Bach film.

Eng: Could we talk about Machorka Muff for a while?...

Str: Well before I went to Houwer as the last one with the idea for "Unreconciled" I had read "City Diary" and at that time Witsch (Boell's publishers) didn't have the rights and so Boell could simply give them to me. Then there were the important elections in Germany. Boell had published that story in 'Welt der Arbeit' the day before the elections, the ones that consecrated rearmament. I liked it very much, not because I wanted to make a film of it. I believe one can't make a film of any book - because one films something about a book, or with a book, but never of a book - one films always from one's own experience. A film lives and exists only when it is based on the experiences of the so-called director. The reason I wanted to make a film about it at once was precisely my first strong political feelings, as I was still a student in Strassbourg, and which I still had, that was my first bout of political rage - exactly this story of the European defence community, ie., the fact that Germany had been rearmed - the story of a rape. That is to say, the only country in Europe which, after a certain Napoleon, the first gangster in the series, had the chance to be free. This chance was destroyed. I know for a fact that in Hamburg people threw stones at the first uniforms, i.e. people didn't want them, they had had enough of it.

Eng: How did you pay for Machorka Muff?

Str: Machorka Muff cost exactly 30.000. Rather expensive, because we didn't receive the uniforms from the Federal Army, but had to have them made.

Eng: In 35 mm?

Str: Yes, yes, and also with original sound, except for the streets in Bonn, since I had been persuaded that it would be cheaper, without it. That was the reason I swore never to film silent again, unless it was a film that would demand it, this decision dates from this time, when I let myself be persuaded

film... and so in cinematography, "matter" - the "matter" as in the Cezanne, which is so laid-on - the simply because they don't know the complex of image and sound, and the interaction of the sound by the image and the interaction of the image by the sound. I got twenty from Atlas, since in the we had tried to get a distribution from Atlas for the Bach film, and Kamp didn't want that - he would have if we had been filming with Karaja that was out of the question - I knew whom I wanted for the principal character and Karajan doesn't play the harp. And then at the same time I brought a little scenario for Machorka Muff, also received the scenario for "Billiards at 9.30" directly from Boell, who trusted us. However he said, it is too expensive, won't make it -- who will pay for the rent of the building. He hadn't read it, had simply not noticed that we didn't show the explosion at all. And then there was a man sitting in the corner, came personally to see Eckelkamp the first time - it was a certain Heine I learned later, and Eckelkamp didn't want any time at all; I just pushed the table and he was picking it up all and then he'd be called away to the toilet and then he'd come back; in the meantime a silent person had read it, then Eckelkamp comes back and the person says to him, you should do it, do make it, it's rather good. That was Heiner Braun. Then Eckelkamp said, I'll give you 12,000 distribution guarantee for the film -- because I wanted Kuby as principal actor - quite a lot for a short film for Eckelkamp that time and we wanted to produce it with Abich (Film Aufbau). Then I talked with the production manager, a Krause, - I was at his mercy, since he was more often in Bremen, and then he later embezzled money from the company and thus helped them go broke. At this man - I realized that - I couldn't do it. Looking for a place to live I met by Kruettner. He said, I'll produce it, then Kruettner took over. Kruettner did a good thing - he made Eckelkamp get twelve to twenty. Even though Eckelkamp the meantime had become nervous before he went as high as twenty he had a certain Schleiermacher, who was a person, to tell me he wouldn't do it because it would cost too much. But you promised me twelve, then yes, like this, not like that. In the end he had read the little scenario himself then I said, either I do it or no one

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Eng: This version of 'Billiards ...' is not the same as the one you made later?

Str: It is.

Eng: But you told me, the first time we met in Munich, that the only thing you did when you still couldn't start shooting was constantly cut out scenes that weren't absolutely necessary.

Str: Yes, that is true. And then, as it came to nothing again... then even Houwer - that was the last person I tried when Bonn and Schmuecker had refused again. That was in the beginning of 1960. Then suddenly everything went faster, as our impatience grew and grew.

Eng: Sorry to interrupt you all the time. Were you already in Munich then?

Str: Since the end of '59, at that time we just couldn't find any money, we had to marry -- we wanted to -- then we took this flat in Munich, towards the end of '59. Until we had reached the stage where we could have married, and then couldn't... it was April 1960. We then had to go to the Registry Office and sign a statement that basically we weren't married at all... under no circumstances did we have the right to a civil marriage and so if children came along, I would have to adopt them (because the French authorities refused to grant the necessary papers). So the last one was Houwer... he even read it quite thoroughly... he is one of the few who did read it properly. He even said he found it exciting right through to the last quarter, but there somehow it wasn't exciting any more, and he would rather like to make it. 'Did I insist on original sound?' and I said: 'Yes'. Well, what does one do when one is actually shooting? All they do is talk -- one just can't film people who move around without saying anything -- that is simply boring. Well,

original sound.

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Eng: But there were technical reasons. They couldn't post-synchronize.

Str: No, they could always post-synchronize. Only they had to record the sound optically while shooting. That is why you notice the cuts so strongly... they could not mix and correct afterwards...

Eng: How could they have post-synchronized then?

Str: They could have shot in a studio using optical sound... of course not lip-sync.

Eng: As in *Blackmail* - Anni Andra only moves her lips, while another girl shouts the text. But afterwards they couldn't change anything.

Str: But this sound of the first talkies remains for me the best that has ever been done. A film like "Man of Aran" was one of the things that made the strongest impression on me. And "Toni" and "La Chienne" and again "La voix humaine" or "Miracolo" by Rossellini. In "La voix humaine" you can hear the dolly moving. That is very beautiful. Not if one does it systematically, like the stupid intellectuals who say: 'I will let people hear the dolly, so that they remain conscious of being in the cinema.' I don't

story of the European defence community, ie., the fact that Germany had been rearmed - the story of a rape. That is to say, the only country in Europe which, after a certain Napoleon, the first gangster in the series, had the chance to be free. This chance was destroyed. I know for a fact that in Hamburg people threw stones at the first uniforms, i.e. people didn't want them, they had had enough of it.

Eng: How did you pay for *Machorka Muff*?

Str: *Machorka Muff* cost exactly 30.000. Rather expensive, because we didn't receive the uniforms from the Federal Army, but had to have them made.

Eng: In 35 mm?

Str: Yes, yes, and also with original sound, except for the streets in Bonn, since I had been persuaded that it would be cheaper, without it. That was the reason I swore never to film silent again, unless it was a film that would demand it, this decision dates from this time, when I let myself be persuaded by Kruettner that it would be cheaper and would go quicker and only in the street in Bonn... shooting silent. And I did it and afterwards I regretted it because then I had to go down to Bonn when the fine cut was ready, and on every spot where the camera had been, I held up a microphone to record the noises and I found out how annoying it is to post-synchronize a film and just how meaningless it is. Because there was also the sentence on the Petersburg mountain, which had to be post-synched - that was the Bonn complex, where the girl says: 'that's how I feel every time I'm a bride', and also the sentence in the Muenster church in Bonn; 'he will become a general' - true, it didn't take much time, half a day in the studio, because I had been shooting as if I had been recording sound as well, i.e. exactly the same time as would be needed to make it synchronous, but then I found out how boring it is. At that time they also wrote in 'Der Spiegel' that I would go into film history because I had gone to Bonn to record the tramways, they should be the same in Munich or anywhere. But that isn't true, the sound is very different, first they aren't the same kind of cars and carriages, and the sound on a corner in Bonn is not all the same as on a corner in Munich.

Eng: This is the usual opinion that the sound is just an illustration of the picture. Something a man makes in the back room with two pieces of tin.

Str: Exactly. Because they don't believe in

should do it, do make it, it's false. That was Heiner Braun. Then Eckelkamp said, I'll give you 12,000 distribution guarantee for the film -- because I wanted Kuby as principal actor -- quite a lot for a short film for Eckelkamp that time and we wanted to produce with Abich (Film Aufbau). Then I talked with the production manager, Krause, - I was at his mercy, since he was more often in Bremen, and then later embezzled money from the company and thus helped them go broke. I met this man - I realized that - I could have looked for a place to live I met Kruettner. He said, 'I'll produce the film then Kruettner took over. Kruettner is a good thing - he made Eckelkamp's film twelve to twenty. Even though Eckelkamp the meantime had become nervous before he went as high as twenty certain Schleiermacher, who was a very nice person, to tell me he wouldn't do it because it would cost too much. But you promised me twelve, the same as yes, like this, not like that. In the end he had read the little scenario he had written then I said, either I do it or not. You promised, one has to learn to do it, try that a film is made by a single person otherwise it is not interesting. I should either make the film himself or let it to me. In any case I won't be involved in anything. And then Schleiermacher went back quite defeated and broke camp around. And then it was in the end twenty. And the remaining ten I got from ourselves from many different small sources. And in the last I had to find another 1000 because of Kruettner - the girl we wanted to use at that time... I knew that even though the idea of using her as she was the girl I had planned to use and not use for Anna Magdalena Bach. I was looking for someone then for Ingrid Zaster-Pehnunz in *Machorka Muff* the sister of Christiane Lang, who was known for years, occurred among people we knew and others. On the day shown us home movies in her home. This is my sister, she works as a secretary in Bangkok. It was in Frankfurt. Then this person from the home movies came to my mind again, and I phoned Christiane Lang and said, where is your sister now in Paris with NATO. She was to play the part and even got one week's salary she had to show them the little scene they said, of all things you have in an anti-war film. Now came the big moment Kruettner -- he said, no, I won't

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whom I wanted for the principal character,
and Karajan doesn't play the harpsichord.
And then at the same time I brought him the
little scenario for Machorka Muff and he had
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9.30" directly from Boell, who tried to help
us. However he said, it is too expensive -- I
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there was a man sitting in the corner when I
came personally to see Eckelkamp for the
first time - it was a certain Heiner Braun, as
I learned later, and Eckelkamp didn't have
any time at all; I just pushed the ten pages of
the little scenario for Machorka Muff on the
table and he was picking it up all the time
and then he'd be called away to the telephone
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Looking for a place to live I met by chance
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because it would cost too much. And so I said,
but you promised me twelve, then he said,
yes, like this, not like that. In the meantime
he had read the little scenario himself. And
then I said, either I do it or noone does --

trip, there are enough girls in Munich who can
replace this Lang. And I said that I wanted her
and noone else. As I already knew her voice as
well -- she had accepted, had got her leave
and I wanted her at all cost. Then we had to
scrape together another 1,000, ie. 11,000 in
all which we had to get together for Kruettner.
Right from the start Kruettner had made me
sign that I would have to renounce all fees for
writing the scenario, directing and cutting and
then it came to a quarrel. Eckelcamp came to
the cutting room and said, where is my satire
-- the film is too long. And then good old
Kreuttner joined Eckelcamp, and we had to
take the cans home with us at night so that
nothing should happen in the cutting room
until we had boxed the film through. And it
came to Oberhausen, (Festival) and was
rejected. And then Eckelkamp said, as
Straub has not fulfilled what was expected of
him the short film Machorka Muff will not be
included in the Atlas programme. But a
year later he showed it anyway.

Eng: I remember you had wanted it as a
short in front of a western.

Str: I thought they would never accept that.
I meant it seriously. I had really made the
film for the people who come to town on
Friday or Saturday to go to the pictures and
because of that the FSK (German censors)
cleared the film after three weeks and then
only for adults eighteen years and over. These
sixteen years olds shouldn't see the picture.
And on top of that it was not cleared for
holidays, which is a joke when you see what
is accepted now. A similar film would just
have been banned in France. Here it came
through, because old Eckhart, who plays the
prelate, - honorary president of the associat-
ion of German film clubs - was ringing the
censor all the time, because he was waiting
to see himself in the film. And they told him,
no, no, there were hard arguments, the film's
going to be banned. Then I learned six
months later that they had sent the film to
Bonn, but then something happened that
would not have happened in France, where
they would just have banned the film... There
they have censorship and so forth - it's really
bad - they would have banned the film, but
then people in the film clubs would have asked
for it... here it was the other way, here
evengood people in Oberhausen, whose names
I don't want to reveal - quite well-known
left-wing intellectuals, came to me and said,
this film must not be shown. I said, why not?
We will look ridiculous, we left-wing intellect-
uals, and we wouldn't get any more grants from
Bonn if you make films like that -- that was the

time these people were still fighting for their

ing her as an equal' - he sits on the bed, he is
really talking and it can't be called a comm-
entary, because it is a commentary that is not
spoken as in cultural films - it is spoken
naturally. Then they say - 'his lips don't move
properly.' Then the film was paired with
"The Last Man", but "The Last Man" was
of course 'Besonders wertvoll' (particularly
important, and therefore tax exempt). And
Machorka Muff was only 'Wertvoll' (important,
but only partially tax exempt). So the theatre
owners threw it out. The main film was open
to anybody twelve years and over. But only ol-
der people go to see it, they said -- but in the
end, only the younger ones came -- in that way
the film was thoroughly exiled into the ghetto
of art films -- and everything was all
right - it was a good coupling - I was pleased
when it came on with 'Le Petit Soldat', but
that was with subtitles, in the Atlas Season,
only a one week show in the art cinemas in the
biggest towns. Then I heard it had been
transferred from 'Le Petit Soldat' to 'Alex-
ander Nevski.'

Eng: Houwer withdrew because he thought
'Unreconciled' would be too expensive.

Str: So there we were sitting around. Danièle
then made a very strict budget and we dis-
covered that we could make the film in two
parts. Namely two thirds in one go. In fact
that's how we did it. In six weeks around
August '64 we shot the first two thirds and at
Easter we made the last third in three weeks,
a total of 9 weeks. Because we had different
actors in the last third - the present - nothing
could go wrong. Danièle had calculated that
we could make the first two thirds for fifty,
then we could show these two thirds in the
naive hope that a distributor would come on
the scene and pay for the last third, as well
as copies and cutting. That was very naive of
us, we hadn't received enough beating yet to
know that it was hopeless to show just this.
And then we collected 50.000 and that carried
us for one and a half years. There was one
who was a dentist, I went to school with him in
France, but he isn't exactly loaded with money
he also has four children. Another one writes
books - a history professor - he wrote a book
about 1848 in France and earned some money.
... some money from Godard too and some
money from Danièle's mother, money from
Nestler, who earned a little bit of money act-
ing... and further two people in Germany -
who don't want to have their names mentioned
- and in this way we arrived at 50.000 Mark
cash - which we put behind bars in the postal
savings bank... and with that money we went
to Cologne to shoot. And in this way we
were able to pay people and transport. Then

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This chance was
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Machorka Muff?

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quite a lot for a short film for Eckelkamp at that time and we wanted to produce the film with Abich (Film Aufbau). Then I quarrelled with the production manager, a certain Krause, - I was at his mercy, since Abich was more often in Bremen, and this Krause later embezzled money from the company, and thus helped them go broke. And with this man - I realized that - I couldn't work. Looking for a place to live I met by chance Kruettner. He said, 'I'll produce it.' And then Kruettner took over. Kruettner did one good thing - he made Eckelkamp go up from twelve to twenty. Even though Eckelkamp in the meantime had become nervous. And before he went as high as twenty he sent me a certain Schleiermacher, who was not a bad person, to tell me he wouldn't do it after all, because it would cost too much. And so I said, but you promised me twelve, then he said, yes, like this, not like that. In the meantime he had read the little scenario himself. And then I said, either I do it or noone does -- you promised, one has to learn in this country that a film is made by a single person, otherwise it is not interesting. So Eckelcamp should either make the film himself, or leave it to me. In any case I won't be talked into anything. And then Schleiermacher went back quite defeated and brought Eckelcamp around. And then it was increased to twenty. And the remaining ten we had to find ourselves from many different and even very small sources. And in the last minute we had to find another 1000 because of blackmail from Kruettner - the girl we wanted lived in Paris at that time... I knew that even before we got the idea of using her as she was the sister of the girl I had planned to use and finally did use for Anna Magdalena Bach. As we were looking for someone then for Inniga von Zaster-Pehnnunz in Machorka Muff the face of the sister of Christiane Lang, whom we had known for years, occurred among the faces of people we knew and others. Once she had shown us home movies in her house and said This is my sister, she works at the embassy in Bangkok. It was in Frankfurt we saw this. Then this person from the home movie came to my mind again, and I phoned Christiane Lang and said, where is your sister?, she's now in Paris with NATO. She wanted to have the part and even got one week's leave, but she had to show them the little scenario and they said, of all things you have to make an anti-war film. Now came the blackmail from Kruettner -- he said, no, I won't pay for the

prelate, - honorary president of the Association of German film clubs - was ringing the censor all the time, because he was waiting to see himself in the film. And they told him, no, no, there were hard arguments, the film's going to be banned. Then I learned six months later that they had sent the film to Bonn, but then something happened that would not have happened in France, where they would just have banned the film... There they have censorship and so forth - it's really bad - they would have banned the film, but then people in the film clubs would have asked for it... here it was the other way, here even good people in Oberhausen, whose names I don't want to reveal - quite well-known left-wing intellectuals, came to me and said, this film must not be shown. I said, why not? We will look ridiculous, we left-wing intellectuals, and we wouldn't get any more grants from Bonn if you make films like that -- that was the

time these people were still fighting for their plans. Then I came to know Gierke, and tried to have him as a producer for 'Unreconciled'. After nearly everything was settled he lost his head after he had asked me, what have you done before this. I said, just a short film. What's the name of this short film? Machorka Muff. Oh, I know that one, and then leapt to his feet. I asked how come you know the film? Well, in certain circles there was a lot of talk. What circles? In Bonn -- it's out of the question, I'm an old officer, I'm still an old officer -- that's how it is.

Eng: Was the film ever shown in Germany before a feature film?

Str: Yes, but unfortunately not with a western. Atlas would have shown the ideal combination, a lot of people would have seen it with "The Silence", people went there without choosing. Then they coupled it with a film called "French Dressing", sub-titled "Try it in French", and the film was so badly received that it disappeared. They gave in only after one and a half years because some people supported the film and said, why isn't this film distributed. The sound was bad - I always asked, what's the matter with the film - the sound is bad. Then I discovered that they referred to Kubly when he reads the commentary 'my old girl friend, Inniga von Zaster Pehnnunz, of new nobility but from an old family, her father was created a peer by Wilhelm the Second, two days before he abdicated, but I have no hesitation in consider-

the scene and pay for the last third, as well as copies and cutting. That was very naive of us, we hadn't received enough beating yet to know that it was hopeless to show just this. And then we collected 50.000 and that carried us for one and a half years. There was one who was a dentist, I went to school with him in France, but he isn't exactly loaded with money he also has four children. Another one writes books - a history professor - he wrote a book about 1848 in France and earned some money. ... some money from Godard too and some money from Danièle's mother, money from Nestler, who earned a little bit of money acting... and further two people in Germany - who don't want to have their names mentioned - and in this way we arrived at 50.000 Mark cash - which we put behind bars in the postal savings bank... and with that money we went to Cologne to shoot. And in this way we were able to pay people and transport. Then we thought it is still not enough... it will only be enough if someone comes with us and gives us material on credit, i. e. camera, dolly, since we had to pay cash for the film stock. Then we got credit from Kirchner in Bavaria. Kirchner left us, but they allowed me to put off payment for a year. Then Sachtler joined us, with whom we had worked already on Machorka Muff and said, I'm so rich kids I'm going to move my company and all, and just to save taxes I'll lend you the blimped Arri and I'll work with you for nothing. Two years later he came and wanted his fee, although the film until then hadn't made any money. Then he did join us and in the meantime he has also got his money, 10.000 for camera and so forth.

Eng: You shot everything in exteriors and around Cologne?

Str: Yes. Exactly 45 different locations, and even if only one hotel occurs in the film it consists of four different ones, three in Munich, one in Cologne.

Eng: How often do the characters appear?

Str: Each character appears only twice. The old woman and her husband appear when they are old and as - Danièle is the old woman when she's young and the old man in real life is then the one with the beard, the son of the old one. That is, the son of the old man in the film plays the older man as young man. Schruella is then Thuena and he is shown as an eighteen year

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old, he was a boy we found on a school playground on the outskirts of Cologne. And Harmsen is the same way, as a forty year old man and as eighteen year old boy - he was another boy from another school from the other side of Cologne.

Eng: I remember a child.

Str: Oh yes, the child who recited the poem, I heard it died later on.

Eng: But you couldn't possibly shoot the film with only fifty.

Str: We shot two thirds and then we made a rough cut. We made the film for seventy two in all. But then we had to wait another four months to get the money we still needed.

Eng: How many people took part in the shooting?

Str: For the Bach film there were more people but for Unreconciled we had one camera operator, one camera-assistant, two sound technicians, two studio workers. For the Bach film we had three - one is an electrician, the other is more like a carpenter, then the two of us, and then a so-called production manager. For the Bach film we had in addition two women in charge of the costumes, one man for the wigs, it's a pain in the neck to make a film with wigs, particularly with children, they are always fighting with each other. And three people for the camera, as we had the Mitchell, and with that one person has to load and load and load. And the second man always put the camera in place and took care of the travellings and the movements, and the cameraman himself never looked through the camera - he was only concerned with the lighting.

Eng: When you had made the Bach film you had a person who had worked with Ophuels?

Str: The sound director was a person who had made La Ronde with Ophuels, and the sound assistant too who was really older than him, but who joined us because they are friends -- he insisted on having him there. Sometimes he is sound director alone, he was sound director for "Les Honneurs de la Guerre." But first of all he had worked as assistant for Pagnol. The assistant directly recorded the sound optically on Renoir's first films. The other had made "Le Bonheur" with Varda, and some other commercial films, such as with Lautner. That was really quite valuable. He was no musician, the director of music recording, but just a man who had tremendous experience with films, through both good and bad films. He displaced and moved the microphone by the collector. Between each take

can't cut a film that has been made with original sound in the way one cuts a film that has been shot silent. When one shoots silent one can make different cuts than when one shoots with sound. With sound one hears the footsteps and people are there, even before they are in frame, one hears their steps, and one can't allow oneself to do what Louis Malle does or even worse Jean Herrman.

Eng: Kirchner then brought out Unreconciled for a while.

Str: It ran for three weeks in the Theatiner in Munich, at first following the comedy with Witsch (Boell's publishers tried to suppress the film). The film was ready just before the Berlin festival. I wrote a post-card to Boell, the film is ready now. - I would even have gone to Cologne just to show him the film, as he

hadn't seen it till then and may be he still hasn't. He only saw the rough cut of the first two thirds. We knew very well what was in store for us, it will be bad in Berlin. Unfortunately I didn't have any choice -- I knew it would be very difficult to find a distributor, or maybe I wouldn't find one at all. So then I thought the only solution is a festival. That was Berlin. I wrote a post-card to Boell, saying 'I'm coming', but he answered at once, I have neither the time nor the desire to watch films. So I went to Berlin with the film. It was rejected by the official selection committee, and then Patalas (editor of the film journal Filmkritik) and some others, who at that time didn't like the film, had a twinge of conscience. They thought, now we will have the comedy with Machorka Muff once more. Somehow or other he liked something in the film -- that has to be said, he didn't quite reject it, and arranged for it to be shown outside the festival. On the poster it said 'New narrative structures in cinema', and below that in small letters 'Unreconciled'. Nobody knew what that was -- only the initiated. They didn't even know if it was a film or a lecture ... and then there was this discussion.

The film was rejected by ninety percent of the German critics, and Witsch said, murder. And then we disappeared to do the subtitles, because Roud wanted the film for New York and London. We could only do this work in Geneva, where we could stay with a friend. It wasn't in order to escape, as has been said. And then people who hadn't quite liked the film started defending it, such as Roos. Witsch finally said, yes, you can take the film around the art cinema circuit, but you can't show it on TV.

Eng: Your reason for filming Machorka Muff was, to put it simply, your anger at rearmament, and your hope that one can really present a problem that is essentially simple in a

consciousness. And the fact that one still lives in a Wilhelminian society in Germany and that there is this continuity, and also about violence. But Boell couldn't quite stomach all this. They said, you have exploited Boell to make something Brechtian, they were really furious, but now the film has come on quite well. I noticed it in Frankfurt, where the Bach film is still a long way off from going well, for instance, four weeks ago in Frankfurt there were six hundred students there, a full house, then Straschek invited us down there, friends of his took over the film studio, they seized power, and there we were with the four films and Machorka Muff is going nearly too well -- they applauded and suddenly during Unreconciled they suddenly start applauding when they heard -- long live dynamite -- where people two years ago had asked what did he say, they didn't even hear it. I think a film can only succeed if it touches people in questions they ask themselves. It is exactly like film-making, now something has changed in Germany let's say simply moved, not to overput it, and then there is a climate where a film can reach the audience directly -- before it was something alien. Also the fact which interested me was to make a film about nazism without mentioning the word Hitler or concentration camps and such things that a middle class family did suspect or want to suspect. To respect all those rules of the game. Art is a game, one makes the rules oneself, and suggests them to the audience and the audience accepts the game or not, only when one has made rules does one play the game otherwise one has to invent new rules.

It ran for three weeks in the Theatiner, rather good, Kirchner didn't have fewer people there than for his usual films. Not so many of the regular visitors came, but then there came people with bicycles, they were grumbling because the bicycles were lying around, and then one week in Cologne and one in Bonn and one in Berlin, and from time to time and also before that I took the film to maybe twenty film-clubs.

Eng: Let us maybe skip the problems you had in finding money for the Bach film. I met you in '67 in Berlin during the festival. You had bought your first roll of Kodak, and went to East Germany.

Str: Three days before shooting started we still hadn't got the money. We then took a risk -- we thought that if we don't make it now while I have the permits it would have taken another three months until I could have gone there again to film this facade of the town hall in Leipzig with my cameraman from DEFA, although the financing of the film was still not secured. First because the meeting of the Kuratorium (State subsidy organization for first features) had not yet approved of the 150 and second be-

out of the question, we will wait year if we have to. That's how time. Then I phoned Godard and sible to find money for the film it will fall to pieces at the last I have at my disposition now on francs -- 8,000 marks -- that's do. And then I learned from Kuratorium secretary of the Kuratorium) the author automatically receives 1 doesn't go to the producer. The thing on the table at Kodak and must make sure that the stock a in Hamburg. They had already g don, to Stuttgart, and from Stuttgart its way to Hamburg. And Kodak the money from Rome. All the t and asked, has the money arrived

Eng: Why then had the stock arrived in London?

Str: That was American stock for All of it four-X. For 'Unreconciled' only double-X. For 'The Pimp .. mixture of double-X and four-X.

Eng: How long did the shooting of the Bach film?

Str: From the 20th August to the 1st '67. The cutting copy was ready in March. The first copy was ready in January.

Eng: How much do you usually take?

Str: For the Bach film we had more than about 50,000 metres (160,000 feet). We didn't want any surprises, we thought we might often have to do retakes -- a musician coughs at the end of a five minutes then all one can do is throw away the film. And with our experience that from Machorka Muff and Unreconciled we thought it would be enough. 30,000 metres for a film 10 metres long, let's say ten times. Maybe we would need more than 30,000 metres for the music, and we managed to get the music with Seitz and the Italian -- we went to Hamburg and reserve 10,000 metres we wouldn't have to pay for. And we shot 28,500 metres, and the film is 10 metres long, which makes a ratio of ten to one. That is also roughly the case for 'Unreconciled'.

Eng: Did you have any assistance in costumes and wigs?

Str: We started work on the costumes nine months earlier.

was only concerned with the lighting.

Eng: When you had made the Bach film you had a person who had worked with Ophuels?

Str: The sound director was a person who had made La Ronde with Ophuels, and the sound assistant too who was really older than him, but who joined us because they are friends -- he insisted on having him there. Sometimes he is sound director alone, he was sound director for "Les Honneurs de la Guerre." But first of all he had worked as assistant for Pagnol. The assistant directly recorded the sound optically on Renoir's first films. The other had made "Le Bonheur" with Varda, and some other commercial films, such as with Lautner. That was really quite valuable. He was no musician, the director of music recording, but just a man who had tremendous experience with films, through both good and bad films. He displaced and moved the microphone by the millimetre. Between each take we listened with Leonhardt and made corrections. The small one, who set up the camera with me, had worked on "L'Avventura" as camera assistant and the person who worked as loader had been an assistant on "Il Desserto Rosso", and the cameraman himself made "Partner" for Bertolucci.

Eng: In Partner there are some very beautiful compositions which reminds one of the Bach film.

Str: The reason is this - this has to be said, people should know this, it isn't just to go ahead and film - the reason is that Bertolucci like me used the Mitchell for the first time. It's the tool that determines the film; the film that I want to make now, it will be determined by the tools, and the other way round, I would like to make it because there are certain things I would like to do which I can do neither with the 35 blimped Arri and even less with a Mitchell although the Mitchell is the best camera in the world, you can do certain things with the Mitchell, really precise pans and travellings that is what I wanted for the Bach film. I needed the Mitchell for the things I wanted to do in the Bach film, but it can also work the other way that a camera, if one doesn't have a fixed conception from the start, let us say - I don't like that because for me the person himself who made the film - but style in an external sense, as one says in Germany, the tool, the camera determines the film. Just the same as one

shown outside the festival. On the poster it said 'New narrative structures in cinema', and below that in small letters 'Unreconciled'. Nobody knew what that was -- only the initiated. They didn't even know if it was a film or a lecture ... and then there was this discussion. The film was rejected by ninety percent of the German critics, and Witsch said, murder. And then we disappeared to do the subtitles, because Roud wanted the film for New York and London. We could only do this work in Geneva, where we could stay with a friend. It wasn't in order to escape, as has been said. And then people who hadn't quite liked the film started defending it, such as Roos. Witsch finally said, yes, you can take the film around the art cinema circuit, but you can't show it on TV.

Eng: Your reason for filming Machorka Muff was, to put it simply, your anger at rearmament, and your hope that one can really present a problem that is essentially simple in a simple film to a simple audience. What was your reason for making 'Unreconciled'?

Str: Yes, there are several points there, questions which I have always asked myself, that is why the novel interested me, otherwise it wouldn't have interested me at all. At first I was always asking myself in France what happened to this or that person -- I had friends who had participated in the Algerian war and who returned quite changed and destroyed -- the same question occurred in the film, the other way round, when I came to Germany, in the streets -- has this person taken part in the war, from Moscow to Cap Grinet or somewhere like that and that was one question and then there was the question which I had asked myself even a long time before -- how was it really in Germany with this they called nazism, did it suddenly one day fall down from heaven or did it grow in society for a long time, there must be some continuity -- history doesn't make such jumps; or what has become of a country that did not liberate itself from fascism, but where the liberation came from outside or what has become of a country where there has not been a revolution? The French revolution wasn't much, but at least it was a mixing-up of classes, but in Germany they haven't even had that, and then I was pleased to be able to make a film about a middle class family which acquires political consciousness although to a limited degree as they are middle class and hence can only acquire a limited con-

people with bicycles, they were grumbling because the bicycles were lying around, and then one week in Cologne and one in Bonn and one in Berlin, and from time to time and also before that I took the film to maybe twenty film-clubs.

Eng: Let us maybe skip the problems you had in finding money for the Bach film. I met you in '67 in Berlin during the festival. You had bought your first roll of Kodak, and went to East Germany.

Str: Three days before shooting started we still hadn't got the money. We then took a risk -- we thought that if we don't make it now while I have the permits it would have taken another three months until I could have gone there again to film this facade of the town hall in Leipzig with my cameraman from DEFA, although the financing of the film was still not secured.

First because the meeting of the Kuratorium (State subsidy organization for first features) had not yet approved of the 150 and second because we still needed 100. Seitz only wanted to make the film under the condition that it wouldn't cost him a penny. First because he is like that and second because he was already bankrupt at that time although it had not yet been made official. And we filmed this and were thinking that maybe it won't come to anything this year and if it hadn't come to anything everything would have fallen to pieces, since all the contracts were already signed.

Eng: You had hired the musicians?

Str: Yes, not we, but a company called Music House. They went bankrupt later on. Seitz took over all the contracts. But the signature of Seitz didn't appear on them -- otherwise everything would have been put back one year. These musicians are only free three times a year, otherwise they are engaged at various places. And at the last minute Baldi (the co-producer) phoned me from Rome, three days before we travelled up there, one week before the final preparations in Hamburg and Stade, Baldi phoned and tried to put pressure on Seitz, 'tell Seitz that I' -- his contribution was also Kodak film stock -- 'tell Seitz that I won't pay that'. Then there would only have remained the costumes, wigs, three camera-people, the Mitchell -- he phoned me because he had heard I don't know through whom down there in Rome that Seitz had received the 150 from the Kuratorium three days before, and thought that he had more money than I did. Seitz told me it is

might often have to do retakes -- musician coughs at the end of a five-then all one can do is throw away. And with our experience that from Muff and Unreconciled we thought be enough. 30,000 metres for a film metres long, let's say ten times: maybe we would need more than 300 the music, and we managed to set per with Seitz and the Italian -- we go to Hamburg and reserve 20,000 we wouldn't have to pay for. And I shot 28,500 metres, and the film metres long, which makes a ratio ten to one. That is also roughly the 'Unreconciled'.

Eng: Did you have any assistance of costumes and wigs?

Str: We started work on the costumes nine months earlier.

Eng: What I want to say is this: I know there are no errors, right? The smallest detail, in the historical

Str: Oh yes, yes, even the spect the formula for the glasses for the musicians and we made corresponding for those who couldn't play without first we didn't want any costumes dominating, that is necessary from point of view. In Rome we please The ones that we had made, also the boys, a third of all the costumes made to measure, we designed them after old prints. And also the instruments. There are some original instruments we used, the oboes are all are also copies, the violins for example used to play standing, which is not more, and the violinists played without support. No, we kept a bloody good details. Also when we had a white window in a church, it was because Renaissance and most of all during Baroque most of the Gothic stained glass were dismantled and replaced with glass.

Eng: Do you have a feeling that you with the work on the Bach film -- which you have today in your film things you would like to do and what believe you yourself can do best?

Str: Precisely. I do it in that way

out of the question, we will wait for another year if we have to. That's how it was the whole time. Then I phoned Godard and said, is it possible to find money for the film stock, otherwise it will fall to pieces at the last minute. He said I have at my disposition now one million old francs -- 8,000 marks -- that's the best I can do. And then I learned from Kueckelmann (the secretary of the Kuratorium) that the so-called author automatically receives 15,000, which doesn't go to the producer. Then I put everything on the table at Kodak and said, now you must make sure that the stock arrives on time in Hamburg. They had already got it from London, to Stuttgart, and from Stuttgart it was on its way to Hamburg. And Kodak was waiting for the money from Rome. All the time I phoned and asked, has the money arrived -- no chance.

Eng: Why then had the stock arrived from London?

Str: That was American stock from Rochester. All of it four-X. For 'Unreconciled' we had only double-X. For 'The Pimp ...' we had a mixture of double-X and four-X.

Eng: How long did the shooting last for the Bach film?

Str: From the 20th August to the 14th October '67. The cutting copy was ready before Christmas. The first copy was ready by the beginning of January.

Eng: How much do you usually throw away?

Str: For the Bach film we had made a contract, about 50,000 metres (160,000 feet) because I didn't want any surprises, we thought that we might often have to do retakes -- when a musician coughs at the end of a five-minute take, then all one can do is throw away the material. And with our experience that from Machorka Muff and Unreconciled we thought that 30 would be enough. 30,000 metres for a film 2,700 metres long, let's say ten times as much. But maybe we would need more than 30, because of the music, and we managed to settle this on paper with Seitz and the Italian -- we would let 30 go to Hamburg and reserve 20,000 more, which we wouldn't have to pay for. And in the end we shot 28,500 metres, and the film is 2,700 metres long, which makes a ratio of exactly ten to one. That is also roughly the ratio for 'Unreconciled'.

Eng: Did you have any assistance in the choice of costumes and wigs?

Str: We started work on the costumes in Rome, nine months earlier.

can't do it better, I'm not the first one to say that.

Eng: ... whether you have a similar feeling, a similar oppression, as Bach must have felt, as people were always hampering him in his work? In the Bach film there are two dominant themes -- one of them, and it is extremely sad, in this year we lost our child, and another constant theme -- he has asked for more money once again, we have received a little -- do you think that not much has changed in the last two hundred years, and that a person who pursues his work without any compromises will still be impeded by society in his work?

Str: Yes, sure, sure, sure.

Eng: And your much-quoted quotation -- the Bach film is my contribution to the fight of the South Vietnamese against the Americans -- should that be understood in the sense that just like them you only do something because you are convinced that you have to do it.

Str: Yes, and something that one has to start afresh every day, that is fundamentally ...

Eng: The swindle in the cinema ...

Str: Yes, just the tradition -- Castro or someone else said once -- the revolution is like God's grace, it has to be made anew each day, it becomes new every day, a revolution is not made once and for all. And it's exactly like that in daily life. There is no division between politics and life, art and politics. This is also why this film interested me, because Bach was precisely someone who reacted against his own inertia, although he was deeply rooted in his times, and was oppressed. But apart from that, if the film had been about any street-sweeper, we would have gone to the same amount of trouble with the technical things and with the problems. I think one has no other choice, if one is making films that can stand on their own feet, they must become documentary or in any case they must have documentary roots. Everything must be correct, and only from then on can one rise above, reach higher. Not without solid foundations. If a button is wrong in a film, it can still be nice as a detail, but only if the film is good, but for that the rest must be correct. And it would be better, if this button were right too.

Eng: So you were not interested in making a period film?

Str: No, that was just a drag. It really is a drag filming with costumes.

Eng: But you're going to do it right away again.

the middle where something happens. Where all the threads run together. Then one is no longer disturbed by the individualities. There is a very beautiful sentence by Griffith -- what the modern movie lacks is beauty, beauty from the moving wind in the trees. The wind is important in this film, the wigs and the costumes contribute towards this, the wind is nothing but the spirit, a film does not consist of images. That is something optical, but of ideas, and this is what moves these wigs, these hands, first the fact that these hands and wigs do move and second what makes them move, that is the wind. It is a film about the wind. And the wind is precisely the work of Bach. And the period and these texts. And let's say, quite simply, the spirit. And the wind blows where it will and it is somehow concentrated here.

Eng: When I saw Unreconciled for the first time, in Munich, you showed it to Otmar Engel (a journalist) and myself in the cinema of Frau Staendner ... and I was a bit drunk and said to you, I don't know what they're all making a fuss about but for me this is the simplest film I have seen for a long time.

Str: ... which pleased me a lot, because everybody said, this is horribly complicated. And I always insisted that it was simple.

Eng: Yes, but now I have thought over these things, also in connection with the Bach film, I agree entirely with you -- the Bach film is also very simple, I don't say it is easy to understand, but it has a simplicity, which I think only two groups of people will understand, or accept, and one group is the specialists, the super-cineastes, who have put all that behind them in order to return to simpler forms, who have had the entire Baroque cinema in them ...

Str: I think one understands the film best if one belongs to the first group -- it is good to have seen as many of Griffith's films as possible. Just by chance -- for seven or even ten years I hadn't seen any, and by chance there were four films by Griffith in Cologne and we were able to see three of them and then we had to leave. And I believe that the whole Bach film has its roots in Griffith, it is true he never made a Bach film and never a film of that kind, but nevertheless one can see that it is there. Therefore it is good to have seen many films -- let us say simply a film culture which doesn't just start with Godard, but which goes further back.

Eng: ... the second group -- this is purely a speculation on my part -- it doesn't have to be true at all -- I could imagine they are people

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might often have to do retakes -- when a musician coughs at the end of a five-minute take, then all one can do is throw away the material. And with our experience that from Machorka Muff and Unreconciled we thought that 30 would be enough. 30,000 metres for a film 2,700 metres long, let's say ten times as much. But maybe we would need more than 30, because of the music, and we managed to settle this on paper with Seitz and the Italian -- we would let 30 go to Hamburg and reserve 20,000 more, which we wouldn't have to pay for. And in the end we shot 28,500 metres, and the film is 2,700 metres long, which makes a ratio of exactly ten to one. That is also roughly the ratio for 'Unreconciled'.

Eng: Did you have any assistance in the choice of costumes and wigs?

Str: We started work on the costumes in Rome, nine months earlier.

Eng: What I want to say is this: as far as you know there are no errors, right down to the smallest detail, in the historical material.

Str: Oh yes, yes, even the spectacles. We got the formula for the glasses for each of the musicians and we made corresponding spectacles for those who couldn't play without them. At first we didn't want any costumes that are too dominating, that is necessary from a cinematic point of view. In Rome we pleased ourselves. The ones that we had made, also the ones for the boys, a third of all the costumes, were made to measure, we designed them ourselves, after old prints. And also the instruments. There are some original instruments among the ones we used, the oboes are all original, there are also copies, the violins for instance, they used to play standing, which is not done any more, and the violinists played without the chin-support. No, we kept a bloody good eye on those details. Also when we had a white transparent window in a church, it was because during the Renaissance and most of all during the early Baroque most of the Gothic stained glass windows were dismantled and replaced by white glass.

Eng: Do you have a feeling that your difficulties with the work on the Bach film -- the difficulties which you have today in your film work, with the things you would like to do and which you also believe you yourself can do best ...

Str: Precisely, I do it in that way because I

times, and that, if the film had been about any street-sweeper, we would have gone to the same amount of trouble with the technical things and with the problems. I think one has no other choice, if one is making films that can stand on their own feet, they must become documentary or in any case they must have documentary roots. Everything must be correct, and only from then on can one rise above, reach higher. Not without solid foundations. If a button is wrong in a film, it can still be nice as a detail, but only if the film is good, but for that the rest must be correct. And it would be better, if this button were right too.

Eng: So you were not interested in making a period film?

Str: No, that was just a drag. It really is a drag filming with costumes.

Eng: But you're going to do it right away again, in Rome.

Str: But simply, much more simply. And the costumes I will be using in Rome won't be too historical, they will just be material falling in folds, but in the case of the Bach film the wigs were for me practically a kind of mask. And the costumes a kind of uniform. And the wigs something like masks. Because one is condemned to be faithful, all one can do is be faithful. And also because everything leads up to the end and contributes to it.

Eng: But for the spectators it is a bit exotic.

Str: That's simply the charm of past things. They have no make-up at all, there is a contradiction between wigs and faces that have no make-up. And I didn't want to do what they told me -- what they usually do in films, I rejected that in Rome. And they accepted that. and the wigs have tulle as foundation, and it is visible underneath, it can be concealed with make-up, but I wanted to make it so that the wig is recognized as such. At that time it was like a hat or a sign of affluence, they just put it on their heads, and didn't want to make it look like real hair, as is customary in films. First of all it is rather picturesque, something that distracts, on the other hand something that makes one concentrate on other things. Because it does the opposite of distracting. Exactly like masks in the Greek theatre. So that the facial expression is enhanced -- because one only sees a sea of moving wigs, one concentrates on the point in

per forms, who have had the cinema in them ...

Str: I think one understands the film best if one belongs to the first group -- it is good to have seen as many of Griffith's films as possible. Just by chance -- for seven or even ten years I hadn't seen any, and by chance there were four films by Griffith in Cologne and we were able to see three of them and then we had to leave. And I believe that the whole Bach film has its roots in Griffith, it is true he never made a Bach film and never a film of that kind, but nevertheless one can see that it is there. Therefore it is good to have seen many films -- let us say simply a film culture which doesn't just start with Godard, but which goes further back.

Eng: ... the second group -- this is purely a speculation on my part -- it doesn't have to be true at all -- I could imagine they are people without any education, that is, children.

Str: Yes.

Eng: They can look at it without prejudice, most people come to a film and know beforehand whether they will like it or not. Because they only go to see films they know they will like.

Str: Yes.

Eng: Children are still open, and that could happen once more with the professional cinema-goers, that they should be able to take in a very simple message again. They are so cynical about film, that they may well reach a point where they may be able to understand very simple and good films again.

Str: I don't think you are exactly crazy and that proved that we aren't crazy either, or still aren't, because you have had this thought in your corner, and Danièle said, when we saw the first copy or when we saw the film for the second time, she said, this is really a film for children. Danièle said that. And when I once said to provoke the pimps of the Industry, that it is a film for a caveman, that is exactly what I meant by that. I still meant it one hundred per cent seriously, it was a provocation, but a serious one.

In other fields it is quite similar. Someone who knows a little, let us say a half educated man - it is always such a person who dis-

covers anachronisms in historical films. A woman in Stuttgart wrote a three page letter to us after she had seen the film in Reutlingen and she declared that the film is not correct at all on the following point, Bach never used his thumb, or something stupid like that, and then one can read in a letter from Bach's son Carl Philip Emanuel around 1752 or 54, i.e. 2, 3, or 4 years after the death of his father, where he says: 'before my father's time musicians seldom used the thumb, but my father used all ten fingers and the thumb even more than the other' - she has heard something to the effect that musicians of the baroque period only used eight fingers and then she sees someone playing with his thumb. A thing like that is a joke, since first Leonhardt has studied the problems of the baroque period, that is his life, he would never had played with his thumbs if it hadn't been right. And further when somebody makes a film, he takes onto himself a lot of trouble and has to cringe, waiting for years before he can do it - then he gets exactly what he wants.

Eng: Unfortunately the situation is that people are systematically corrupted by other films. When I see a film I always annoy people because I point out all the things that are wrong, wrong cars, wrong dresses, wrong haircut, everything is wrong - you're never used to seeing things done correctly in a film - normally you're cheated in films, because it is easier to use papier mâché, because it is cheaper...

Str: 90% of films are based on contempt for the people who go and see them. The sentence we heard most often, even before Machorka Muff, when we insisted on a certain detail... because we thought, there are no details - everything is detail or specific things or one thing is just as important as another... also the smallest things - they always said, nobody will notice, nobody will see it; also when it came to sound: nobody will notice, nobody will get it; this is based on contempt for the audience, or on cheating, which comes to the same thing. But when somebody really knows something about costumes, and hasn't just picked up a thing or two, he knows that in a certain period many more possibilities are open, than one really thinks; it isn't so limited. The same is true about furniture, we have had this experience ourselves, we were also uneducated and naive, usually you only know the typical things and not the untypical; people believe that in the baroque period they hung certain pictures on the wall and that there were tapestries and drapes everywhere,

always what I call the science fiction aspect of my films, that people ask themselves after the film or while it is running, what kind of strange planet is that where these sort of things go on or they have these sort of attitudes, and then people see their own world in a new way. First it looks new and then let us say they are carried away, and secondly this world is very strange and partly not strange at all, yet not 'estranged' as some people like to put it -- it has nothing to do with that.

Eng: Truffaut's Farenheit film. Precisely because he has not made a science fiction film - when it really is a science fiction film - it could have all happened today, but the audience knows that things aren't like that now it is not shocked at all by what it sees - they are not afraid, whereas they are always afraid in a science fiction film that things may become like that in ten years, which of course is just nonsense.

Str: I think one can do more; it is better that one makes science fiction without doing it systematically; unless one is completely a mad genius in this field, a kind of Jules Verne, one can't make real science fiction films, because one can't make a film about the future one is always running behind; everything that one makes systematically in cinema is bad. You handle the past like this, in an intuitive way, but I see what disturbed you in Truffaut - he makes a science fiction film consciously - that doesn't work. I don't like the film myself for the same reason and for other reasons as well - the Truffaut which I can most easily accept is 'Tirez sur le pianiste' - but the point where you may be wrong is that one relates it to the present. But that is not what it does, he projects it into the future and is saying that this is our present in the future. It would have worked if he had really shown the burning of books in the past, but then in a completely new set-up. Maybe the spectator would have been able to do the jump into a menacing future more easily.

Eng: How do you see the relation between the almost totally passive spectator and the film that you are showing; they hardly have any influence on the film, all they can do is leave. There are already painters and sculptors, the pop artists, who try to activate people with their things; in the theatre there are also forms like that, where the audience is on the stage etc.

Str: That is a caricature of Brecht. I don't believe in these things, there may be people

what we are doing is new. We make films which are going to be created in the minds of the spectators. That is completely new and nobody has done it before. My films are like -- and then he saw me down in the audience -- my films are alike those of Straub, for instance -- then I was furious and stood up and said, the things I do are not new at all they are traditional. Anyone who makes films progresses a tiny step forward on his road, in one direction, and ... only tiny steps, and then he repeated that, yes, yes, steps, and then I said, not at all, not steps but tiny steps. I still don't believe that one can make films where one always ... I think that is the negative influence of Godard.

Eng: Now we hear he is trying things like showing one reel at a time, and is inviting the audience to discuss the film between reels.

Str: For the moment I don't believe in that, personally, but I would like to be convinced. If somebody really succeeds in doing that and convinces me then I will accept it, but I'm only going to be convinced by someone who has achieved it himself. But he's still an author. I think most of it is just a fashion, a very flimsy fashion, which won't last for long. For the moment I don't see any future in these things. Three weeks later we showed 'Unreconciled' in Switzerland. They looked at it with, shall we say, admiration, but no more than admiration. It was just like certain film clubs in Germany two or three years ago, where the film was tolerated, but just. Exactly the opposite happened in Frankfurt just before that, where there was an exchange between film and audience, good in a certain sense, but apart from that, what John Ford and I mean, - and it isn't a paradox when one thinks about it - John Ford is still the most Brechtian of all film-makers, because he shows things that make people think, damn it, is that true or not, for instance the end of Fort Apache, which was completely misunderstood, even by Sadoul, it doesn't have a happy ending and this is correct to make the audience collaborate on the film: in the middle of the battlefield you can see general Custer (Fonda), he dies there and all his soldiers have been shot, then a few moments later John Ford says, John Wayne looks at it and says, this man is crazy -- literally. Then finally we have the so-called happy ending, one sees John Ford, he is sitting there, behind him you can see a huge historical picture, representing the battle. And in front of John Ford, in a circle, there are journalists taking notes, and asking questions; somebody suddenly notices the picture on the wall, the rather heroic historical picture and asks, is that correct, was it real-

in Algeria - I had really stand them when I was in Algerian war; when I saw Ford, the one that shows the Indian-hunter with a certain because he understands why people have said that films. In this sense yes,

Eng: For me Ford is a pe century.

Str: Ford belongs to his liberal, he can't change hi do that.

Eng: But he shows that dis are worked out in a fight. become good friends.

Str: But one shouldn't acc shows at face value, that is Brechtian effect, maybe Ford even if he shows something not always have to be like that you are right on another an idea that can go crazy a what you have said as theon fact there are films, such metro', which many left-w France celebrated as a left consider it to be a real fas the other aspect of what yo wanted to say earlier on, y too: people for example - b exceptions and I am happy the contrary - in itself it d to show a strike or a barri confirmation, of their own spectators liberate themsel and then they feel they c in their lives. Or Garell - of his films - who said that to show a barricade as a be Politically that is just as wr people see there has nothing it satisfies them momentarily more, it tends to give them Not that I want to talk like th up and say they want to make people feel guilty. I wouldn't that group of people who only people feel guilty - just to m guilty is clearly quite wrong one of the things about which quarreled with Godard in Le suddenly had the impression forced the issue, when he s make films with the means c against capitalism. Which n fight stupidity with stupidity

in Algeria - I had really tried hard to understand them when I was in Paris during the Algerian war; when I saw the film by John Ford, the one that shows the settler and the Indian-hunter with a certain initial respect because he understands him. That is why people have said that he makes fascist films. In this sense yes, but not in any other.

Eng: For me Ford is a person from the 19th century.

Str: Ford belongs to his generation, he is a liberal, he can't change his skin. Nobody can do that.

Eng: But he shows that disputes between men are worked out in a fight. Afterwards they become good friends.

Str: But one shouldn't accept everything he shows at face value, that is what I call the Brechtian effect, maybe Ford thinks that even if he shows something all the time it does not always have to be like that. I would say that you are right on another point, but that is an idea that can go crazy and I wouldn't accept what you have said as theory. As a matter of fact there are films, such as 'Zazie dans le metro', which many left-wing papers in France celebrated as a left-wing film, while I consider it to be a real fascist film - that is the other aspect of what you said. But what I wanted to say earlier on, you are quite right, too: people for example - but there are also exceptions and I am happy to be convinced of the contrary - in itself it doesn't make sense to show a strike or a barricade, it's just a confirmation, of their own beliefs. The spectators liberate themselves in that moment and then they feel they don't need to do it in their lives. Or Garell - I haven't seen any of his films - who said that it is just as bad to show a barricade as a beautiful naked girl. Politically that is just as wrong. Because what people see there has nothing to do with life it satisfies them momentarily, and what's more, it tends to give them a clear conscience. Not that I want to talk like those who stand up and say they want to make films which make people feel guilty. I wouldn't like to belong to that group of people who only want to make people feel guilty - just to make people feel guilty is clearly quite wrong. That is also one of the things about which I have quarreled with Godard in Locarno too. I suddenly had the impression or maybe I had forced the issue, when he said, one must make films with the means of capitalism against capitalism. Which means one must fight stupidity with stupidity. I don't believe that.

(Vlado Kristl, Yugoslav film-maker working in Germany). I said, okay, so far I haven't done anything for the theatre but I am interested. In France I always wanted to stage a play by Corneille, one of his last plays; in Germany I wanted to stage 'Die Massnahme' by Brecht, as there are no good translations of Corneille. But they said, we will never get the rights to perform it, they had got a letter from Helene Weigl (Brecht's widow) with a facsimile letter by Brecht saying 'Take another play; this play is not to be performed.' That is completely wrong. If one has written something, then it is there, to be performed. Then they said, we won't get it. And again, but we have got the rights for a play by Bruckner. Then I said, I'm sorry, but I haven't read it. Then they left the play at my place, but I said, under no circumstances can I do it right now. I would like to make the Bach film now. Why don't you come back when my mind is free again? Then I read it and found it didn't interest me at all, I didn't like the play by Bruckner very much. And then they came back and I said, look for someone who can do it as Bruckner's play, without altering a comma, because I don't particularly like it, and it doesn't make sense to do something one doesn't like. And they looked for someone else and then came back and said, we haven't found anyone. In the meantime I started to get interested in the play, but all I did was delete things, till finally it became so short that I had to tell them, it is no longer a play by Bruckner, it has become my own play; I would like to stage it as soon as I have got time, but you should know that it will only be about ten minutes long. Then I produced it for them and it played in the theatre for three weeks together with another play, and then the theatre closed down. Then the theatre manager, Horst Soehnlein, was put in prison, in Frankfurt; he took part in an arson raid on a department store. The police also came to the theatre, where they were putting on an anti-Springer play (the newspaper king), furthermore it was closed because of debts. Before this happened, towards the end of April, we simply filmed the whole thing, and the film was constructed around the play. But still there were elements in it that had been on my mind for seven years, for instance this Landsbergerstrasse in Munich. We had discovered it as we were walking home from Pasing in the outskirts of the city, coming back from a late show in a cinema - I think it was Distant Drums - and we walked along this street to our place. At that time I thought it would be nice to make a film there, and we thought out a story which wasn't all that clear, something about a man who put his wife on the street every night, and then I read in Le Nouvel Observateur that Godard

called real life are very literary -- they are by Juan de la Cruz, a Spanish poet, who died in 1791 - I translated the three poems literally, as the existing translations were done in the 19th century, and no longer have anything to do with the text - and also this wedding which is even a bit more theatrical than the play, and also a bit like science fiction. The point of view of the black man, who looks on the whole ceremony as on an alien world, although he stands there as participant.

Eng: Concerning the things that were spoken on the stage I probably understood the meaning of the German words but didn't bother about working out what it meant...

Str: Because it doesn't really mean anything. You did the right thing. It really has no meaning - that is what makes my text, the cut version of Bruckner, completely different from the original play, which was two hours long. Here it lasts eight and a half minutes, without the pieces of black leader. With the black lead it is ten minutes long, exactly one roll of Kodak negative. But it doesn't mean anything. It simply shows relations whereas in Bruckner's play there is psychology - there one knows what it is all about - but in my piece there are only constellations, people who have certain relations with each other which dissolve and reappear. Nothing more. Let us use a fashionable phrase: it shows modes of behaviour.

Eng: If people examine this film and expect a message they will be disappointed.

Str: I have already mentioned that in connection with 'Unreconciled.' They were disappointed because what Stravinsky says about music applies here: 'I know very well that music is incapable of expressing anything.' That's a fact. I think I will never make a film where there is a message à la Patalas.

Eng: What do you think of the American musical?

Str: Oh, I don't know enough about it. The one I know best is 'Gentlemen prefer blonds'. I have seen it several times in Paris. But after I came to Germany...

Eng: Let's put the question in context, Most American films are rather honest to start with. They are saying, we want to entertain.

Str: Because for a start they are not ashamed of their own professional skill, and therefore they don't despise the audience either. And also because they don't think, we are going to

the people who go and see them. The sentence we heard most often, even before Machorka Muff, when we insisted on a certain detail... because we thought, there are no details - everything is detail or specific things or one thing is just as important as another... also the smallest things - they always said, nobody will notice, nobody will see it; also when it came to sound: nobody will notice, nobody will get it; this is based on contempt for the audience, or on cheating, which comes to the same thing. But when somebody really knows something about costumes, and hasn't just picked up a thing or two, he knows that in a certain period many more possibilities are open, than one really thinks; it isn't so limited. The same is true about furniture, we have had this experience ourselves, we were also uneducated and naive, usually you only know the typical things and not the untypical; people believe that in the baroque period they hung certain pictures on the wall and that there were tapestries and drapes everywhere, and then one reads in a book written by someone, who is a specialist in these things: 'in the baroque period people - except, of course, those who lived in a palace - had very little furniture, at most one cupboard in a room, usually nothing on the wall and no curtains either; and when someone sees it made like that he says 'that is a caricature, that is not historical enough.'

Eng: People just want to see the image they have of the baroque period -

Str: They want a confirmation of the image they have of the baroque period, but this picture is based on a caricature. Similarly the film *Unreconciled* would have stopped if we had only taken those costumes and location relating to the short period 1937-39 which don't seem too obvious today, those which make people say, oh, that is 1934, typical of the time. First one wouldn't have had past and present on one level, secondly because basically I hate what is typical of a period, and thirdly because it has more impact on people. When they see a sign, this is 1934, at once, and they hear on the bridge, are you Jewish? then they say oh yes, 1933, antisemitism, Germany, and they lean back in their seats and are happy again, we knew that all ready, they feel reassured. But when they see a bridge, not knowing what period it belongs to, and costumes that don't look exactly modern but on the other hand aren't necessarily historical, and then hear the question, are you Jewish? then it comes home to the audience -- that is

planiste' - but the point where you may be wrong is that one relates it to the present. But that is not what it does, he projects it into the future and is saying that this is our present in the future. It would have worked if he had really shown the burning of books in the past, but then in a completely new set-up. Maybe the spectator would have been able to do the jump into a menacing future more easily.

Eng: How do you see the relation between the almost totally passive spectator and the film that you are showing; they hardly have any influence on the film, all they can do is leave. There are already painters and sculptors, the pop artists, who try to activate people with their things; in the theatre there are also forms like that, where the audience is on the stage etc.

Str: That is a caricature of Brecht. I don't believe in these things, there may be people who do these things well, I am always ready to be convinced of the opposite of what I have been thinking, exactly as when I saw recently in Switzerland a film by a young man, his name is Salvodelli, he lives in German-speaking Switzerland, he calls himself the immigrant worker of Swiss cinema. He showed me a medium length film in colour, which in the beginning - for about three minutes - is everything that I normally hate in films, and suddenly one sees it isn't that at all and one sees a very beautiful film, he is really a poet in the field of cinema. Then I let myself be convinced that it isn't the techniques he seemed to use in the beginning, which are wrong - although it seemed to me they were - but just the way they are normally used; then you are convinced that you are wrong and that everything is possible. Bach said once, he once said a very beautiful sentence, which was repeated by his pupils, he said 'it must be possible to do everything.' Anyhow, until now I haven't believed it. It is the same when Kluge always goes on about the film which is created in the minds of the spectators -; I don't believe it. Then I react like Rivette and state that film - let's not quibble over the words - is only based on fascination, and that it only touches people, and touches them deeply, when it is based on fascination, i.e. on the opposite of distance or participation or some such thing, that the traditional attitudes of people... one never invents very much, Renoir said, not like Kluge, with whom I quarreled in Mann-heim. He climbed onto the stage and said, well I understood better the attitude of the settlers

John Ford and I mean, - and it isn't a paradox when one thinks about it - John Ford is still the most Brechtian of all film-makers, because he shows things that make people think, damn it, is that true or not, for instance the end of *Fort Apache*, which was completely misunderstood, even by Sadoul, it doesn't have a happy ending and this is correct to make the audience collaborate on the film: in the middle of the battlefield you can see general Custer (Fonda), he dies there and all his soldiers have been shot, then a few moments later John Ford says, John Wayne looks at it and says, this man is crazy -- literally. Then finally we have the so-called happy ending, one sees John Ford, he is sitting there, behind him you can see a huge historical picture, representing the battle. And in front of John Ford, in a circle, there are journalists taking notes, and asking questions; somebody suddenly notices the picture on the wall, the rather heroic historical picture and asks, is that correct, was it really like that? Then John Wayne turns around, startled and surprised, looks at it, wants to answer, turns around again to answer and one notices for a fraction of a second that he is about to say it is all crap, it has been made too heroic, it is false, etc., but he says instead, yes gentlemen, it was really like that. Then John Ford goes another step further, and John Wayne says, right now I haven't got any time, I must go back to work, and then he puts on his cap - until then he had on quite a different one - exactly like the one Fonda had earlier in the battle. And then one sees him ride away on horseback, they are going to another battle. That is what I call a Brechtian film.

Eng: But when one thinks further along that line one arrives at the conclusion that it is wrong to show good films in cinemas. Because if you have a film which says the same as you think, when you then see it in the cinema it has essentially...

Str: the opposite effect.

Eng: Exactly. To formulate it in a very exaggerated way: the worse a film is the better is it.

Str: I think you have a correct intuition there, which is important, but one shouldn't systematise it. I think that the reason why people call John Ford 'a fascist', is that he is better at showing for instance what a settler was - when I saw *'The Searchers'*

confirmation, or their own belief spectators liberate themselves and then they feel they don't in their lives. Or Garell - I think of his films - who said that it to show a barricade as a beautiful Politically that is just as wrong people see there has nothing to it satisfies them momentarily, more, it tends to give them a Not that I want to talk like those people feel guilty. I wouldn't like that group of people who only make people feel guilty - just to make guilty is clearly quite wrong. one of the things about which I quarreled with Godard in *Loca* suddenly had the impression of forced the issue, when he said make films with the means of against capitalism. Which means fight stupidity with stupidity. that.

Eng: But he doesn't do that...

Str: No, but it is a temptation that one must make films that as commercials, although you different

Eng: Like Lelouch, who isn't and friendly...

Str: I don't know Lelouch, but I did Varela's film, *'Money'*, the wife of Cournot (film critic Gaullouise Bleu, produced by Lelouch) really mean is that you can no films intelligent enough, because enough stupidity to put up with daily lives -- the life they lead makes them more and more stupid. take any more; you destroy them off. That is why it doesn't make them with more stupidities.

Eng: You directed a stage play

Str: They came to me just before it was made, just as we were in with the contracts, and in the rupture of the first producer and now we have the musicians hanging their necks and we are still not able Kuratorium is going to refuse will be that -- then they came to opening a theatre. They also

to show a barricade as a beautiful naked girl. Politically that is just as wrong. Because what people see there has nothing to do with life it satisfies them momentarily, and what's more, it tends to give them a clear conscience. Not that I want to talk like those who stand up and say they want to make films which make people feel guilty. I wouldn't like to belong to that group of people who only want to make people feel guilty - just to make people feel guilty is clearly quite wrong. That is also one of the things about which I have quarreled with Godard in Locarno too. I suddenly had the impression or maybe I had forced the issue, when he said, one must make films with the means of capitalism against capitalism. Which means one must fight stupidity with stupidity. I don't believe that.

Eng: But he doesn't do that...

Str: No, but it is a temptation - he means that one must make films that are just as bad as commercials, although your aims are different

Eng: Like Lelouch, who isn't really so nice and friendly ...

Str: I don't know Lelouch, but Godard defended Varella's film, 'Money, Money', starring the wife of Cournot (film critic and director of Gaulloise Bleu, produced by Lelouch). What I really mean is that you can never make your films intelligent enough, because people have enough stupidity to put up with in their work and daily lives -- the life they lead is horrible, it makes them more and more stupid -- they can't take any more; you destroy them and finish them off. That is why it doesn't make sense to burden them with more stupidities.

Eng: You directed a stage play in Munich.

Str: They came to me just before the Bach film was made, just as we were in great difficulties with the contracts, and in the middle of the bankruptcy of the first producer and when we thought, now we have the musicians hanging around our necks and we are still not able to shoot. And the Kuratorium is going to refuse again, and that will be that -- then they came and said, we are opening a theatre. They also came to Kristl

to the theatre, where they were putting on an anti-Springer play (the newspaper king), furthermore it was closed because of debts. Before this happened, towards the end of April, we simply filmed the whole thing, and the film was constructed around the play. But still there were elements in it that had been on my mind for seven years, for instance this Landsbergerstrasse in Munich. We had discovered it as we were walking home from Pasing in the outskirts of the city, coming back from a late show in a cinema - I think it was Distant Drums - and we walked along this street to our place. At that time I thought it would be nice to make a film there, and we thought out a story which wasn't all that clear, something about a man who put his wife on the street every night, and then I read in Le Nouvel Observateur that Godard had plans to make a film on a similar theme, then I gave up my plans. I thought, now someone else has done it, certainly quite differently from the way I would have done it but what's the use. Then we made the Bach film, and afterwards I returned to this theatre project and then I felt like making a short thriller. We thought we could construct such a film around the play. But while I was cutting the play and deciding to produce it for them I didn't think about the film at all. And then the other things fell into place automatically, for instance the principal character turned out to be black and further we discovered those horrible slogans on the wall in the telegram department of the main post office - 'Stupid Old Germany - I'll hate it over here' - she must have gone through many bad experiences, to have been driven so far. And in this way the film took shape... To put it a bit pretentiously: They have allegoric relationships, meaning that those on the stage, who act in the play, bear more logical relation to each other, than they could in life. Remember for instance when he says: 'Lucy is a very smart creature; I could certainly make her walk the streets'. Then one thinks he really like that in life. And when he says marriage or something, one thinks he really would like to marry her not the actress on the stage. And the other way round, because the text in the film became fairly non-theatrical as opposed to the stage play which was completely theatrical - and because the texts in so-

there is a message a la Patakas.

Eng: What do you think of the American musical?

Str: Oh, I don't know enough about it. The one I know best is 'Gentlemen prefer blonds'. I have seen it several times in Paris. But after I came to Germany...

Eng: Let's put the question in context, Most American films are rather honest to start with. They are saying, we want to entertain.

Str: Because for a start they are not ashamed of their own professional skill, and therefore they don't despise the audience either. And also because they don't think, we are going to do this as cheaply as possible - people will accept it anyway - nobody will notice. In Germany they scrimp on film stock. Danièle was just reading about Ben Hur - of the 200.000 feet of negative stock they shot for the chariot scene they kept only 750.

Eng: I feel that in American cinema you only admire technical skill - form is everything, content is nothing.

Str: Yes, but empty form doesn't exist. There is the soul -- that is something that doesn't exist either. The soul is the form of the body. I feel that every film-maker should be a Thomist in so far as one can only make films when one somehow believes that the soul is nothing but the form of the body -- this is particularly important concerning the people in front of the camera.

Eng: If you had had more money, would your films have become different?

Str: No. In Berlin I said before - and people considered it a provocation - that even if I had had millions at my disposal I would have made 'Unreconciled' just the way I did, and not otherwise. No, this condensation of the script is not a question of money. For the Bach film I needed money for the costumes and I was willing to wait for this. I would have preferred not to make the film at all rather than make it in a different way just to save money. No, one should rather adjust the

shooting schedule to eliminate unnecessary expenses. One should save on telephone calls but not on negative stock. Bad producers economise on film stock. I wouldn't have made the Bach film without the Mitchell. The contribution of the Italian producer, the Mitchell, the costumes, for the camera people and filmstock all this cost 120 to 130,000 DM. Since I couldn't find anybody to pay for such expensive costumes and for the Mitchell I had to wait.

Eng: So it wouldn't have been a different kind of film if you had had a normal budget - you would have made them just in the same way as you have till now?

Str: Yes. On the contrary, it would me unhappy if a producer who had too much money forced me to incur unnecessary shooting expenses - due to the fact that when you have a certain reputation people run after you - when you are young and unknown and dying in your little corner you can wait ten years with a film project.

Eng: But you would like to film in colour?

Str: First of all I would like to be able to live off my work. One doesn't have to become rich from film-making, not at all, but directing should be paid like any normal work - one should be able to live off it. And secondly one should have some money to prepare a film, for travelling - and not have to go hitchhiking as I had to do for the Bach film. Yes, but with colour it is the same. I think it is a virtue of

the Bach film that it was finally in black and white, but the next film I'm making - I would have waited another year rather than do it without colour.

Eng: It is a play by Corneille, also in costumes, but in 16 mm and colour.

Str: Yes, in 16 mm because I want to do things which are only possible with a hand-held camera.

Eng: French dialogue?

Str: Yes, I will use people -- Italian friends -- people whose mother tongue is Italian but who speak French particularly well as the text is very difficult to learn. But after the Bach film I need a very dense and solid text - I must have a web that is very dense, and I think that this text by Corneille is important just now, because it provides a sort of mental gymnastics. Moravia would like to play the role of Galba, the old emperor Galba.

Eng: What is the name of the play?

Str: Othon - the successor of Galba, who himself was the successor of Nero. He has to face the decision of either becoming emperor and losing his woman or the other way round. And towards the end he is close to not becoming emperor and he loses the woman he loves after all. Since the people speaking the text in French do not speak French as their mother tongue, the text won't be so sterile, the way it becomes at the Comedie Francaise.

These people who do not master the language as their mother tongue will face obstacles which in my opinion, should make the text more alive. And it goes without saying the verses shouldn't be spoken as verses, but freely.

Eng: Are you going to film the play as it is on the stage?

Str: No, it is the opposite of everything I have done so far. I always try to do something different. First it will be made on a single location, a hill in Rome, Monte Palatino, and not on 45 different locations as in Unreconciled, or 35 in the Bach film, from Hamburg to Dresden, Munich etc. One location only, and secondly instead of filming theatre as in the Bridegroom, I will be fairly close to the actors and use more cuts. Imagine a theatre that would appear superficially somewhere between Hitchcock and Dreyer, although I certainly don't try to copy anyone.

(This interview was recorded in German by Andi Engel in February, 1969, in London. It was translated by Arne Bors. Straub's films are available from Polit Kino, 5 Beaufort Gdns, SW 3. Sixteen mm. prints of the two shorts and Nicht Versoehnt can be booked now; a thirty five mm. partly dubbed, partly subtitled print of the Bach film will be available after its first commercial run, probably at the ICA in February. Around the end of February, there will be a sixteen mm. subtitled print of the Bach film.)

filmography of jean-marie straub