

The following text by Joshua Feinstein was originally published as chapter in his book, *The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in the East German Cinema 1949-1989*. (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002). The DEFA Film Library has not made any changes to the original text, including titles and names. If you would like to quote from this text, please use the original publication and page numbers.

## A Case of Love Confused? Slatan Dudow's *Verwirrung der Liebe* as a Meditation on Art and Industry

By Joshua Feinstein

Slatan Dudow's *Verwirrung der Liebe* (*Love Confused*, 1959) is a light and fanciful romantic comedy. Featuring imaginative sets, sensuous interludes, and a lively score, [...] Dudow's work [has] more to do with the realm of fantasy, dream, and desire. Instead of taking issue with what the GDR was like in the present, *Verwirrung der Liebe* addressed the regime's utopian vision, the grandiose "Cultural Revolution" proclaimed at the Fifth SED Party Congress of July 1958. The central tenet of this platform was that the working class had to "storm the heights of culture" in order to achieve its historic mission. As Walter Ulbricht explained at a labor congress the following year, "You cannot work at the factory in socialist fashion and then do something completely different at home." Workers had to abandon "old habits" and become participants in a new national culture in which everyday life would be instilled with the creative power of art. Thus the time had come for men to stop playing skat in bars while the women stayed home and darned socks. Instead, the whole family should be spending the evening in the theater raising their socialist consciousness!<sup>1</sup> In keeping with the Cultural Revolution, Dudow's goal in making *Verwirrung der Liebe* was to "point out new aspects of our society, to uncover [its] special brightness [*Heiterkeit*]" and to show how "beauty and *joie de vivre*" had become "active social factors" in the new state.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these lofty intentions, much of the controversy surrounding Dudow's work was rather prosaic. Before its release, functionaries questioned the inclusion of a nude bathing scene. This issue proved so sensitive that Walter Ulbricht [chairman of the GDR State Council] and his wife, Lotte, screened the film privately in order to decide the matter. Once the objectionable scene was reshot with swimsuits, the film enjoyed a strong run in movie theaters. Dudow's difficulties, though, were only just beginning. First, a rather heated debate concerning the film broke out in the press. Readers wrote to major publications both praising the film lavishly and attacking it harshly. Then the director became the target of an internal studio investigation of cost overruns on the project. An extravagant personality, the Bulgarian-born "father" of the German Communist cinema was notorious for his inability to follow a schedule or budget. Since a major reform effort was under way within the DEFA feature film studio, the time was inopportune for immoderation. In keeping with the officially proclaimed Cultural Revolution, the goal was to reconcile the artistic and industrial aspects of moviemaking. Higher economic efficiency, better-quality movies, and political objectives were all held to be attainable if art and life could be effectively integrated in the process of production itself. Dudow—his enemies contended—epitomized the prima donna who demanded privileges and ignored financial constraints. Thus he embodied the past rather than the future.

But what could skinny-dipping possibly have to do with industrial efficiency? And why would the attention of the SED's first secretary, the most powerful man in the GDR, be required to decide whether a film could include nudity? It is my contention that these questions are apt ones for understanding the juncture DEFA, and more generally the East German socialist project, had reached by the late fifties. First, the picture is indicative of the great distance the German Communist movement had traveled culturally since its formation during the Weimar Republic. As a personage, Dudow was a living link to the avant-garde, often libertine cultural traditions associated with the left during the Weimar Republic, in which nudism was a significant element. Aesthetically staid, his picture exhibits little of the modernist energy associated with the art of that era. Still, Dudow developed a definite critique of the strange admixture of wild utopian aspirations and *kleinbürgerlich* norms for personal behavior that characterized official culture under Ulbricht. Second, the controversies surrounding *Verwirrung der Liebe* suggest ways that the language of the Cultural Revolution informed the actual construction and contestation of the studio as a site of cultural

production. While Dudow became a target of criticism, other filmmakers successfully argued for internal organizational reform of the studio on the basis of the Party's platform.

Of great importance for understanding the issues at stake in the film and its reception is the notion of "socialist morality." The Party's highly conventional moral expectations for its members were closely allied with its call for a Cultural Revolution. For the Party, both were part of a more general project of aesthetic education, whose ultimate goal ironically often came down to little more than greater industrial productivity. The greater their artistic and ethical sensibility, it was held, the more GDR workers would internalize the Party's precepts and voluntarily submit to both political and workplace discipline. At the same time, the Cultural Revolution still drew on an idealistic conception of art as a moral and emancipatory force. Thus filmmakers and others tried to envision a more complex process of emancipation through art. For them, the success of the socialist project depended, in the abstract, on the growing autonomy of individuals and, more directly, on granting institutions like DEFA a measure of self-control, even quasi self-governance. According to this view, socialist morality was a question of inner responsibility as much as external duty. The Party should lead but also have trust in others, or at least in fellow socialists, to follow on their own accord.

After briefly sketching Dudow's unique stature within the East German cinema, the chapter's first section employs a method from literary criticism, archetypal analysis, to interpret the film as a meditation on the relation between the utopian and the real with direct bearing on the regime's Cultural Revolution platform. My analysis then turns to *Verwirrung der Liebe's* official reception and the discussion of the film in the press and shows how these debates reveal a spectrum of varying attitudes toward the practical significance of the SED's ideological aspirations. At the heart of this debate was the status of the regime's ambitious goals for socialism. Were these merely a pretext for the rigid enforcement of societal norms, or had the new society already developed sufficiently to allow new freedoms? The third section considers the controversy concerning cost overruns on *Verwirrung der Liebe* as an example of how the obvious incongruity between ideological objectives and socialism's actual practice played itself out in the studio. This incident reveals a highly fractious institution. Even for an industrial organization such as DEFA that was dedicated to an art form, transforming the process of labor into aesthetic endeavor was an utopian undertaking. Artists, management, and workers approached their shared undertaking differently and in unreconcilable ways. Finally, the chapter briefly traces DEFA's institutional history through the early 1960s. In many ways, the discursive force driving the studio's institutional development during this period was the attempt to remedy the types of issues evident in the cost overrun controversy. Ironically, *Verwirrung der Liebe* itself honored the Cultural Revolution as an ideal but raised questions about its application. The work insisted that the realms of necessity and freedom, to paraphrase Friedrich Engel's famous definition of Communism, could not be prematurely bridged. Hence Dudow may have anticipated that any overly zealous attempt to suspend the contradiction between art and industry might end, as the studio's reform efforts did with the Eleventh Plenum, in debacle.

### DUDOW AND HIS FILM

Slatan Dudow may not have been an immortal, but he was the closest to one that the East German cinema had to offer. In both literature and drama, the GDR succeeded in attracting internationally recognized, emigré artists, whose names recalled the glory of Weimar art. For film, though, there were no personalities of the same stature as Johannes R. Becher, Bertolt Brecht, Anna Seghers, Friedrich Wolf, or Arnold Zweig. The one person who came close was Dudow. Other leading DEFA directors of his generation—Erich Engel, Martin Hellberg, Kurt Maetzig, Wolfgang Staudte—first attained prominence in film after the war. In addition, the only one of them who enjoyed an international reputation as a filmmaker, Staudte, never worked exclusively in the East or settled there. In contrast, Dudow's engagement with both cinema and the Communist cause extended back to the 1920s. Arriving in Berlin from his native Bulgaria in 1922, he studied theater, worked as a film critic, and participated in Communist drama groups. For a while, he was a chorus member in Erwin Piscator's legendary theater company and later worked with Brecht as an assistant director. His career making films began in 1929 through participation in the production of several Communist documentary shorts. In 1931, he started work on his own feature-length film about unemployed workers, *Kuhle Wampe, oder Wem gehört die Welt?* (*Kuhle Wampe, or Who Owns the World?*). With scripting by Brecht and Ernst Ottwalt and music by Hanns Eisler,

this became one of the most enduring artifacts of Weimar radical culture.

Dudow's postwar pictures never lived up to the great promise of his early masterpiece. His later productions were major by DEFA standards but of scant significance outside the GDR. Even so, Dudow remained a reflective artist. His theoretical articles, if limited in scope and number, demonstrate a lively intelligence. His work is also remarkable for its thematic continuity over a period of more than thirty years. From Weimar, through French and Swiss emigration, up to his death in 1963, Dudow as a playwright and filmmaker returned frequently to two issues. The first of these was the daily experience of workers and later of GDR citizens as a site of progressive social transformation. This theme extended from *Kuhle Wampe* through Dudow's first two DEFA films, *Unser täglich Brot (Our Daily Bread, 1949)* and *Frauenschicksale (The Destinies of Women, 1952)* and to his last (unfinished) picture, *Christine (1963)*. The second issue that fascinated Dudow was humor as a means of promoting political consciousness. This aspect of his work is evident in certain scenes in *Kuhle Wampe*, as well as in works completed in exile, including the film *Seifenblasen (Soap Bubbles, 1935)*.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after his return to East Germany in 1947, Dudow published an essay titled "Comedy and Its Social Function." Here he attempted to sketch out a dramatic theory in which humor fulfilled a role comparable to the category of *Verfremdung* (estrangement) in the ideas of his mentor, Brecht. In both cases, the desired dramatic effect involved a moment of self-estrangement for the audience, so that its members might see themselves as socially determined objects.<sup>4</sup> For Dudow, the value of humor had to do with its ability to make theatergoers or movie viewers recognize the absurdity of their own situation:

Who actually laughs in comedy? Ridiculousness is a situation to which a person does not gladly confess; I would almost say that he is rarely capable of becoming conscious of his own ridiculousness. Where do we find a person who voluntarily puts his own ridiculousness on display? Even so, he wants to learn something about his own insufficiency, and, if possible, also have a laugh. The best way for him [to achieve this] is through a third party. In this [figure], he recognizes his own weakness and laughs about his own ridiculousness. And if the ridiculousness in the depicted individual becomes one with the ridiculousness of the corresponding society so that the laughter about both becomes a unity, then comedy achieves its perfection.<sup>5</sup>

Dudow's first DEFA project was very much in accordance with this belief in the liberating power of laughter. Titled *Weltuntergang (End of the World)*, the work was a grotesque parable addressing the German populace's fear of change in the immediate postwar period. The project remained incomplete, presumably because the studio judged the work inconsistent with the official shift toward socialist realism in the late forties.<sup>6</sup> Whatever the exact case, the cultural political climate of the early fifties left relatively little room for the type of subversive humor that Dudow advocated.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the filmmaker realized only one openly satirical project at DEFA, and this was set in the Federal Republic. In *Der Hauptmann von Köln (The Captain from Cologne, 1956)*, Dudow adopted the premise of Carl Zuckmayer's famous play *Der Hauptmann von Köpenick* for Cold War purposes. The movie concerns a waiter whom a veterans' association confuses with his namesake, a notorious war criminal. Far from having negative repercussions for the protagonist, this error causes him to become the toast of Cologne. His future seems assured until the real captain shows up to claim his share of the *Wirtschaftswunder*.

In Dudow's postwar work, only *Verwirrung der Liebe* makes equally evident his love for comedy and his desire to depict the progressive transformation of workers' lives under socialism. The reasons why these themes tended to remain separate in his other films are not difficult to surmise. Other DEFA directors had attempted to set humorous stories in the GDR, but the antecedents they provided were hardly encouraging. Judging from his available statements, it is almost certain that Dudow dismissed most of these films either as kitsch alien to socialism or as ideologically "schematic" works that failed cinematically.<sup>8</sup> More significantly, according to Dudow's own theoretical premises, writing a comedy was equivalent to "holding court, whether about people or social conditions, and laughter is the final and highest instance of judgment."<sup>9</sup> Any film made in such a spirit and set in the GDR clearly ran the risk of official displeasure, since the Party reserved for itself the right to appraise the new society's progress.

To understand the limitations Dudow was working under, it is useful to consider the insights of "archetypal" analysis, which suggest that only a narrow range of comic possibilities might have satisfied Dudow's brief as a loyal socialist filmmaker interested in the humorous depiction of the new society. In his famous analysis of the "structural

principles” of literature, Northrop Frye describes the basic plot of dramatic comedy as involving a frustrated lover who revolts against paternal authority: “At the beginning of the play the obstructing characters are in charge of the play’s society, and the audience recognizes that they are usurpers. At the end of the play the device in the plot that brings hero and heroine together causes a new society to crystallize around the hero, and the moment when this crystallization occurs is the point of resolution in the action, the comic discovery.”<sup>10</sup> Frye further distinguishes among six phases or structures of comedy, which span the distance between irony and romance. The first five of these, Frye argues, correspond to “a sequence of stages in the life of a redeemed society.”<sup>11</sup> In the first phase, this order is shown “in its infancy, swaddled and smothered by the society it should replace.” In the third phase, the new reaches maturity and triumphs. By the fifth phase, it is already “part of a settled order which has been there from the beginning, an order which takes on an increasingly religious cast and seems to be drawing away from human experience altogether.”<sup>12</sup>

Dudow could hardly have made an ironic comedy about the GDR verging on open satire. As Frye notes, such comedies tend to emphasize obstructing characters rather than scenes of discovery and reconciliation. As far as the SED was concerned, the GDR already was a redeemed society where the forces of progress had seized power and antagonism between the generations was obsolete. Thus it would have been subversive for Dudow to produce a film that made light of older figures embodying and representing a new, just order. At the same time, a comedy suggesting a static society outside of history would also have been impermissible. Officially, the GDR was a country on the move, whose leadership was in tune with the real needs of the populace. The director therefore had to come up with a plot that landed clearly to the right of the third phase, or on the side of Frye’s scale closest to romance, but one that did not stray too far from the middle of the yardstick. What essentially remained was Frye’s fourth phase of comedy. In contrast to the other archetypes that leave the alternative to the existing society only vaguely defined, this one plays itself out on two planes. The plot commences in the “normal world” of obligation and social convention, proceeds into a “green,” arcadian one associated with boundless fertility and wish fulfillment, reaches its resolution, and returns back to the “normal world.” Even if the second world is ultimately abandoned, passing through it charges the action with “the symbolism of the victory of summer over winter” and fulfills “the arch-typical function of literature in visualizing the world of desire, not as an escape from ‘reality,’ but as the genuine form of the world that human life tries to imitate.”<sup>13</sup>

In order to understand how *Verwirrung der Liebe* exhibits the structural characteristics Frye associates with the fourth phase of comedy, it is necessary to consider the movie’s plot in some detail. The four main protagonists are two young couples. Dieter and Sonja study medicine and art respectively, while Edy and Siegi are workers. The film begins in the first pair’s “normal” world. Dieter is introduced attending a lecture; Sonja participating in a painting class. Their lives are constrained by obligations associated with time. Both are rushing to meet each other after class, but other commitments interfere with their rendezvous. Dieter is already late for the amateur FDJ “agit-prop” group he directs. Sonja has to help prepare a “carnival” party, which the art students are hosting.

The first introduction to what Frye describes as the “green” world occurs when Sonja, Dieter, and other guests arrive at the party and change into costume. Earlier, Sonja tells Dieter, “I bet you will not be able to recognize me,” and her words prove prophetic. Dressed in Bacchanalian garb, Dieter wanders through a warren of colorful, imaginatively decorated rooms. In one chamber, partygoers dressed as angels dance to serene harp music. Another space is filled by celebrants who, prodded on by devils, dance to jazz with wild abandon. Dieter enters a room labeled “Castel D’Amour” by sliding down a chute, and two women successively accost him with full kisses on the lips. Alcohol flows freely, while imaginatively clad revelers smooch left and right.

The action takes form when the debauch fails to achieve an orderly conclusion. Dieter and Sonja have agreed to a midnight rendezvous, when all of the partygoers will reveal their identities. As the moment approaches, Sonja watches Dieter mistakenly pursuing Siegi. The removal of the masks reveals his error, but he kisses Siegi all the same. Sonja leaves the party in distress.

A dream sequence follows in which Dieter’s academic anxieties become entangled with his romantic confusion and scenes from the carnival. One of his professors assumes the pose of Alexander von Humboldt in the famous statue in front of the university in Berlin. He tosses an apple toward Dieter. Siegi, clothed only in fig leaves, takes a bite from the fruit. Sonja appears in her carnival costume. The camera zooms in on her, only to have her countenance change to

## A Case of Love Confused?

Siegi's. The next morning, Dieter wakes to the irritating sound of an alarm clock, arrives late for his class in surgery, and suffers his professor's sarcasm. The next scene shows him successfully begging forgiveness from Sonja.

This initial reestablishment of normalcy proves tenuous. The first taste of the realm of desire has had its effect. The film's second major segment begins with a comic chase scene. Dieter sees Siegi pass by on a bus and takes off in wild pursuit in a cab, finally catching up with her in the subway, as the train she has boarded pulls out of the station. Guileless as he is, Dieter reports the incident in detail to Sonja, who by now is hardly unaffected by her boyfriend's behavior. Seeking mental repose, Sonja takes a sabbatical from her studies and volunteers to work in a factory.

At her newfound place of employment as a lathe operator, Sonja meets Siegi, whom she invites to model for a painting. The next segment begins with Dieter arriving at Sonja's apartment and immediately noticing Siegi's portrait. Sonja now decides to force the issue. She sets Siegi up by inviting her to a concert and giving the second ticket to Dieter. By now, Dieter's life is also in disarray. His agit-prop group is angry with him, and his schoolwork has suffered, too. Thus, when Siegi proposes that they escape these obligations by going to the Baltic Sea together, he jumps at the chance.

This decision brings Edy into play. Dressed in work fatigues, he visits Sonja at her apartment to inform her of their respective lovers' vacation plans. Sonja feigns nonchalance but accepts Edy's invitation to a second concert. A series of shots emphasizes the beauty of the concertgoing experience as well as the opulent hall of the East Berlin State Opera. While they are taking their seats, Edy proudly tells Sonja the exact number of bricks he laid as a mason working on the recently rebuilt edifice.

With chords from Beethoven providing a transition, the action returns to the "green" world. Edy and Sonja are seen riding on his motorcycle down country lanes and visiting the Elbe valley, while Dieter and Sonja camp out on a Baltic beach. Sonja and Edy then visit Dresden's Zwinger Museum. They pause in front of a portrait of a reclining nude as Sonja explains: "During the Renaissance, one regarded mortal beauty as a virtue.... Beauty itself served to elevate humankind. It communicated a sense of self-worth." The next shots show Dieter and Siegi frolicking in the waves and then embracing in the dunes. Just in case anyone might miss the point, the scene concludes with waves breaking on the shore. Sonja and Edy are then shown going swimming in a secluded pond together, another stock image sometimes employed in DEFA films to denote sexual intimacy.

The film's fourth segment involves the attempt to incorporate the new constellation of partners into their "normal" world. One scene shows Siegi telling Sonja of her engagement to Dieter; another one features Edy awkwardly proposing to Sonja. Scenes featuring every possible pairing of the four protagonists—Edy and Dieter even have a drink together—emphasize reconciliation. Edy proudly shows off his artist fiancée to his fellow workers, and Siegi's mother provides some comic relief by pretentiously announcing to her neighbors that her daughter is marrying a doctor. To celebrate this newfound harmony, Siegi proposes a double wedding to Sonja.

The movie then enters its last segment and quickly builds toward its moment of comic discovery, which coincides with its festive conclusion. Parallel shots show Sonja and Siegi in bridal costumes walking through the archways of their respective tenement buildings to be whisked away by a modest convoy of gleaming cars, all of East German manufacture. As these proceed through the city, shots alternating between the two couples make it clear that all is not well. Second thoughts, hinted at in the previous segment, now lead to a complete reversal of the action. Siegi asks Dieter if getting married means that she will never be able to kiss Edy again. Edy demands to know from Sonja if she loves him, and she responds that he should have thought of this question earlier. The cars stop, and the brides trade places.

Thus the film returns to the original constellation of partners. A student marries a student; a worker a worker. The normal world of obligations reestablishes itself. The effect of the story is clarifying rather than subversive. As if to emphasize the salutary effects of the protagonists' excursion into the "green" world, the last segment begins with a shot of Dieter, who repeatedly arrives late or unprepared to lectures, applying himself to his studies with new energy. Siegi, whose flirtatious ways antagonize Edy, submits finally to matrimony. Edy, an amateur boxer with the unfortunate habit of thrashing Siegi's other male acquaintances, learns to curb his temper outside the ring. Sonja receives new inspiration through working at the factory and her encounter with Edy. The triumph of a youthful yet established order is indicated in other ways, too, during the film's final scene. Two shots show a police officer directing traffic: his initial bewildered expression changes into an approving smile as he observes the exchange of brides. Siegi's mother is outraged with her daughter

for giving up her chance to marry a doctor, but Sonja's father, a factory director who was once a worker, gives the whole affair his blessing. Thus spontaneity and verve allied with benign authority triumph over the last vestiges of petit bourgeois pretension and the film fades to black to the sound of a triumphant wedding march.

### THE SWIMSUIT SAGA AND THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

The authority figures in real life were not as magnanimous toward this celebration of youthful exuberance as those depicted within the work itself. Above all, officials objected to the film's sensuality, which they perceived to be a threat to socialist morality. After an initial screening on August 26, 1959 the Approval Commission under the direction of Ministerium für Kultur (MfK, Ministry of Culture) State Secretary Erich Wendt described the work as a "well-executed entertainment film." Particularly noteworthy was its optimistic premise and its creator's attempt "to demonstrate that *joie de vivre* is also at home in the GDR." At the same time, the commission concluded that the film "brackets out actual social problems and contents itself with depicting the relationships between young people ... [leading to] a few complications and a happy end." Of greatest concern was the carnival sequence, which, it was feared, would not appeal to the sensibility of the "vanguard" but rather to "the so-called average taste of the public." Similarly, the commission members did not object to nude-bathing scenes on principle but raised the question of whether these would distract the public's attention from the work as a whole. Thus the body decided to withhold approval of the film in the version presented and recommended reducing the lengthy carnival sequence.<sup>14</sup>

The commission's findings were only the first stage of deliberations on the matter. Even a high-ranking functionary such as Wendt does not seem to have been fully equal to the task of disciplining the famous director. On September 26, the studio informed the commission of the completion of several cuts to the carnival sequence, totaling less than one minute, but did not mention the nude-bathing scene.<sup>15</sup> Wendt, apparently frustrated by the commission's failure to censor these explicitly, arranged for a viewing of the film by Alfred Kurella. Although the head of the Politburo's Commission on Cultural Matters took Dudow's side in the dispute, his decision was suddenly reversed.<sup>16</sup> With only days remaining before the film's scheduled public preview on October 10, Dudow hastily set off to the Baltic to reshoot the questionable scene.<sup>17</sup>

Even so, the saga of the missing swimsuits was hardly over. The film's general release was planned for November 13. In the interim, Dudow made one last-ditch effort to retain the nude-bathing scene by framing it as a second dream sequence. Presumably also around this time, Dudow met with Cultural Minister Alexander Abusch and the director Konrad Wolf. Dudow countered Abusch's objections to the racy scenes by claiming that Abusch himself had appeared as a nude extra in a sequence of *Kuhle Wampe* celebrating physical culture! Wolf pointed out that Abusch had also published articles in the twenties advocating nudism.<sup>18</sup> In short, both directors demanded an explanation of why an activity that the Party had advocated under capitalist conditions had to be treated as a taboo now that the German working class had become master of its own destiny. Thus the matter arrived before Ulbricht, who, after viewing the film privately with his wife, Lotte, insisted on proper attire.<sup>19</sup>

On one level, this controversy may have represented little more than a clash of sensibilities. The regime's leaders were notorious for their conventional and prudish taste, while Dudow had the reputation of being a rake,<sup>20</sup> a man of the senses, who might have simply rejoiced at the sight of naked bodies. Still, nude bathing had a certain history and significance in the GDR. In his memoir of a childhood spent as an American in East Germany during the fifties, Joel Agee describes the cultural politician Johannes R. Becher's obsession with stamping out the practice at Ahrenshoop, the picturesque artist colony situated on the Baltic coast.<sup>21</sup> In the seventies, *Freikörperkultur* developed into a mass phenomenon, and to this day East Germans pride themselves on being less inhibited on the beach than their Western compatriots. Nudism in the GDR, it has been argued, had less to do with the sexual revolution than with a search for a cultural idyll free of societal restraints. The phenomenon's acceptance cut across demographic categories, and stereotypical enthusiasts were "average" families rather than hedonists or hippies.<sup>22</sup>

Of course, in 1959, these developments in popular culture lay mostly in the future. Dudow's fervent interest in depicting nude bathing has to be seen in the context of the radical traditions of the Weimar period. The vehement opposition voiced by GDR officials, many of whom in their youth may have been advocates of nudism, was a sign of the profound transformation of the German Communist movement over the previous thirty years. A party that had once existed in close

proximity with a rich and imaginative counterculture had become the jealous master of a state. Revolutionary exuberance now took a backseat to technocratic rhetoric and autocratic methods. Dudow's pointed exchange with Abusch suggests that the director knew precisely why he was including a little flesh and other scenes suggesting a "bohemian" mode of existence in his film. These scenes evoked an earlier period when being a German Communist had as much to do with a lifestyle of rebellion and protest as it did with submitting to Party discipline.

Pretentious as they are, Sonja's words on the elevating nature of physical beauty in the art museum scene immediately preceding Dieter and Siegi's romp on the beach were supposed to be taken seriously. Preserving the integrity of this sequence was so important to Dudow that he insisted on returning to the Baltic to reshoot the bathing sequence for a third time even after the film had previewed!<sup>23</sup> If barred from using actors in the nude, he wanted the next best thing: ones whose clothing status would be rendered indiscernible through the use of backlighting. Indeed, the association of aesthetic experience, sensual abandon, and youthful exuberance constitutes a major subtext of *Verwirrung der Liebe*. The film's most noteworthy sequence, the carnival, takes place on sets constructed on screen by the art students. A similar motif is Sonja's use of concert tickets as a pretext for bringing Dieter and Siegi together, and classical music provides the transition from the city to the idyll of the vacationing couples. Thus art and love both provide an alternative to the realm of duty and obligation.

There are further components to the "green" world. The story takes place in summer, which is not only the most appropriate season for a romantic tryst but also the traditional time for school and family holidays. The film exploits the division between labor and leisure in an unusual way as well. For Sonja, volunteering in a factory provides respite from her troubles with Dieter and her frustrations as a student. Finally, the work presents consumerism as a field of self-realization. In the first segment, Sonja and Dieter meet in front of the main East Berlin department store, the "HO" (Handelsorganisation, trade organization) on Alexanderplatz. After Edy proposes marriage to Sonja, she dashes out to a conspicuously well stocked store to buy groceries for dinner, for which she chooses an expensive wine to mark the occasion. In addition, Siegi and Sonja return to the "HO" to help each other select wedding presents for their grooms.

Thus, in addition to emphasizing love and art as privileged realms, the film draws on rather conventional notions to construct a sense of freedom and individual autonomy. In each case, acting out one's desires ultimately does not subvert the normal world of obligation but redeems it. By the same token, the association of art and sex with consumerism and holiday recreation elevates the latter pair nearly to the level of aesthetic experience and reigns in the subversive potential of the former pair. Last but not least, the depiction of Sonja's factory furlough, or *Arbeitseinsatz*, in this context blunts the radical edge of "production ideology" expressed in the officially proclaimed Cultural Revolution. During the Weimar Republic, various Communist writers emphasized the industrial workplace as a uniquely privileged place of progressive consciousness formation; one of them was Ernst Ottwalt, who collaborated with Dudow and Brecht on *Kuhle Wampe*. In *Verwirrung der Liebe*, however, Dudow transforms the key premise of this earlier literary tradition into just another facet of an established order; an aspect of social existence whose significance and function are comparable to school holidays.

In many ways, what functionaries did not object to in Dudow's film is as remarkable as what did attract their ire. The work's characters are typed in a fashion that carried an obvious political significance. Dieter and Sonja represent the "intelligentsia"; Edy and Siegi the proletariat. Of the men, Edy is the more imposing—and physically taller—figure. While Dieter's flightiness leads to the love confusion in the first place, Edy is a man of a few words and a boxer, willing to fight off rival suitors with his fists if necessary. Of the women, Siegi combines good looks and a flirtatious soul, while Sonja is a serious—at times calculating—person, whose main attribute is her talent as an artist.

Given the emphasis of the official political language on labor as an aesthetic process capable of overcoming the last vestiges of social stratification, any film featuring such characters could hardly escape interpretation as a direct political parable. The Party's relationship with the educated elite was a long-standing problem. During the first years of the GDR, the regime had done its best to lure and retain expert talent with high salaries and generous economic inducements; this policy, however, went against the ideological grain and was a cause for resentment among the populace. Indeed, the long-range objective from the beginning was to replace the "old intelligentsia" with a new one comprised of workers and their children. To achieve this aim, the majority of university places were reserved for students who could demonstrate their proletarian origins, and special "Worker and Farmer's Academies" (Arbeiter- und Bauernfakultäten) were provisionally set up.

By the late fifties, representatives of the “fresh blood” (*Nachwuchs*) so desperately sought by the Party were beginning to assume positions of responsibility in the new society; in the interim, however, official objectives had grown more ambitious. At least rhetorically, Party leaders now declared the very opposition between intellectual and physical labor an impediment to the victory of socialism. One of the high points of the Cultural Revolution was an April 1959 writers’ conference that took place at the vast Bitterfeld Electrochemical Complex—today one of the worst ecological disaster sites in Europe. Here, Walter Ulbricht criticized what he described as “the old notions of many workers, who say, ‘planning and economic management, etc., those up there run that already; and cultural policy—those up there are in charge of that.’” Thus the first secretary admonished his audience “to plan together, work together, and rule together.” Artists had a key role to play in this “great ideological transformation, this forward development.”<sup>24</sup> Economic and cultural progress were mutually interdependent. Already workers at progressive factories like the Bitterfeld facility “stand at their machines, master the complicated process of production, constantly further educate themselves, read ... professional literature ... [and] to an ever increasing degree high literature.” Out of workers, who under capitalism were only “the object of reactionary cultural policy,” were developing individuals “who creatively participat[e] in the further development of [the GDR’s] entire cultural life.”<sup>25</sup>

No great amount of imagination was necessary to interpret *Verwirrung der Liebe*’s final scene as a direct affront to this vision of a society embodied by an aesthetically inspired, multifaceted *homo faber*. The return to the original constellation of partners at the end of the film, it can be easily argued, reinforces the gap between utopian desire and social reality that the regime claimed to be narrowing. The metaphorical implications of a student marrying a student, and a worker a worker, would seem to contradict the official emphasis on eradicating the differences between intellect and brawn, labor and aesthetic experience. All the same, functionaries charged with supervising the film’s production apparently were unconcerned with the film’s resolution. The question of its seamliness arose only after the work’s release. A minor furor about the film erupted in pages of four major publications: *Junge Welt*, the daily organ of the FDJ; *Sonntag*, the weekly organ of the Kulturbund; *Die Wochenpost*, another weekly paper primarily devoted to cultural issues; and *Forum*, a weekly addressing students. Even well-meaning reviewers expressed puzzlement concerning the significance of the film’s conclusion. Horst Knietzsch, the authoritative film critic for *Neues Deutschland*, despite some reservations, generally praised the work. Still, he asked, “Would it have not better corresponded to our life if the mason had married the art student and the formula “shoemaker stick to your soles” had not been applied?”<sup>26</sup> Many letter writers agreed. A student from Halle wrote, “This ending is rather bizarre in our socialist society today, because precisely the opposite of that which the film expresses is being attempted.”<sup>27</sup>

At their harshest, commentators charged Dudow with having created a film that was alien to socialism’s new reality. Several pointed out that Sonja’s private apartment—which in a Western film would hardly have drawn attention to itself as extravagant—represented an unattainable luxury for the vast majority attending university in the GDR.<sup>28</sup> One reader was skeptical that a socialist student would waste money on cab fare, as Dieter did to chase after a woman he had met only briefly at a party.<sup>29</sup> Several letter writers attested to the discrepancy between the behavior of actual East German students and those shown in the film. One argued, “In *Verwirrung der Liebe*, we experience students celebrating carnival, flirting, not paying attention in lecture, and otherwise not [being] particularly serious. Is that typical of us?”<sup>30</sup> H. Oehlschlägel could not understand “how Dieter can be such a bum.... It is inexplicable to me that his fellow students, who are with him almost everyday, [would] tolerate such work habits.”<sup>31</sup> A. Rafeld suggested that the film had little to do with socialism and could have been set in any country. She further accused Dudow of borrowing gags from prewar UFA films.<sup>32</sup>

*Verwirrung der Liebe*’s proponents argued that the work, far from being unrealistic, succeeded in depicting aspects of the new life in the GDR neglected in other DEFA movies. Despite his objections to the film’s conclusion, Horst Knietzsch, in his *Neues Deutschland* review, honored Dudow’s attempt “to demonstrate in an amusing fashion the victorious strength of socialist life through the taken-for-granted beauty of our everyday existence.”<sup>33</sup> The critic elaborated that the director “wanted to portray young people who approach the aesthetic ideal of our age.... [For him] it was a matter of developing a way of depicting the young, harmonic person in socialist society.”<sup>34</sup> In *Der Morgen*, Christoph Funke crooned about “the love of our young people today which is not free from misunderstanding and mistakes...but knows no tragic consequences, because it is rooted in a socialist order.”<sup>35</sup>

Commentators also differed in their assessment of the various characters. One reader described Edy as the “likable mason [displaying] honest pride in having participated in the construction of the State Opera House.”<sup>36</sup> In contrast, another letter writer thought the depiction of workers in the film was condescending. First, he wanted to know how Sonja became a skilled lathe operator so quickly. Second, he thought Edy came across as an “admittedly good-natured, but thoroughly primitive and naive person.”<sup>37</sup>

Other film viewers had misgivings about the depiction of Siegi. M. Kühnhagl asked, “Is it not an insult to the army of our office workers if one depicts their representative as so primitive and brainless as Siegi?”<sup>38</sup> Conversely, several letter writers deemed Sonja decadent and bourgeois. Nevertheless, others were willing to adopt a more indulgent attitude toward the film’s female characters. H. Siebers, in his letter to *Sonntag*, described the main protagonists as “genuine children of our socialist society.” Siegi might seem superficial, but he asked her critics to consider “how many young people appear untroubled, even though they take their work seriously.”<sup>39</sup> With a more sophisticated argument, the *Forum*’s film reviewer, Winfried Junge, defended the characterization of Sonja. According to him, her reaction to Dieter’s disloyalty showed her as a true member of the new society. In a similar situation, “a girl of petit bourgeois sentiment” would fall prey to primitive jealousy. Sonja, though, does not feel “betrayed.” “Why should she? ... Is she nothing without him, is she not an autonomous individual [*Persönlichkeit*], who lives and creates her own life?” Thus her bringing together of Dieter and Siegi does not occur out of resignation but out of self-confidence and a desire for clarity. Junge concluded, “She can afford to play fair. Quite simply from the feeling of equal rights.”<sup>40</sup>

There are, of course, several ways of interpreting the extensive discussion of *Verwirrung der Liebe* in the press. The numerous letters against the film could have represented an orchestrated campaign of harassment against Dudow, but this possibility seems unlikely. First, the film attracted 1.9 million viewers, an impressive figure by DEFA standards. Presumably, the regime would have taken other steps and hindered distribution if it judged the film subversive. Second, the letters and articles favoring the film, as well as Dudow’s publication of a spirited rejoinder, suggest that the controversy may have indeed represented a rare example in the GDR of more or less open debate. The parameters for discussion were circumscribed. Participants had to assume the attitude of loyal East German citizens and judge the work in terms of its contribution to the brave new society’s unfolding. Still, there was obviously considerable room for disagreement. In a state dedicated to the appearance of political harmony, the controversy around the film provided an occasion for individuals to take a position and argue with each other about what their society was about.

Central to debate concerning *Verwirrung der Liebe* was an issue very basic to the language of politics that defined the GDR: socialism’s utopian aspirations. Those attacking the film insisted not only on the future triumph but on the actual validity of the regime’s vision of total harmony. For this reason, they rallied around the charge of insufficient realism. East Germany and the Party’s definition of the new society were identical. Walter Ulbricht’s words had the force of reality. In contrast, those defending the work were hardly taking issue with the SED’s official program, but their attitude toward the cinema was different. They were willing to tolerate a discrepancy between art and reality as well as between utopian ideal and lived experience. They readily recognized that Dudow’s film was not supposed to provide an exact image of a perfect socialist society but belonged to a certain cinematic genre with its own restraints. Indeed, two of Dudow’s most enthusiastic boosters, the cultural editors of *Forum*, argued as much. In their view, his film represented “something unusual for the viewer not used to easily digested, but nutritious fare.” Realism for them was not “hundreds of meters of film of students sweating over their books, but good, true-to-detail milieu depiction, lively people, and youth.” Thus, they raved, the work had the potential of becoming “one of the best propaganda films (light genre) for the multifaceted life of our republic.”<sup>41</sup> Official attitudes toward the film are more difficult to generalize. As indicated above, the discussion leading up to the work’s release was limited in scope. There is no record that functionaries attempted to change the film’s conclusion or extensively criticized the depiction of the protagonists. Instead, they fixated almost exclusively on two issues: nudity and the carnival sequence. At least in part, very specific concerns were behind these objections. The Democratic Republic’s first legal nude beach had received grudging approval in 1956,<sup>42</sup> and the regime seems to have been fearful that the film might encourage further nudism.<sup>43</sup> There was even an actual carnival hosted by art students that got out of hand.<sup>44</sup> So, to a certain degree, officials judging the film might have been responding to relatively minor issues incidental to the film itself.

In a wider sense, the regime's objection to the film's sensuality had to do with its interest in promoting "socialist morality." In fact, during the 1958 Fifth SED Congress, Ulbricht proclaimed "Ten Moral Commandments." These emphasized "clean and proper living" as a prerequisite for being a true Communist.<sup>45</sup> Of interest here is less the quasi-religious form of this declaration than the linking of political commitment to private morality. For the Party leadership of the fifties, the GDR's march toward the future depended on the irreproachable conduct of each of its citizens. Outward conformity to a rather conventional code of behavior was a sign of inner belief and loyalty to the Communist cause. Ironically, the inclusion of a carnival scene in *Verwirrung der Liebe* may have been strangely appropriate. In contrast to Catholicism, Communism did not have on its calendar of celebratory days an inversion festival, a ritualized subversion. Through his film, Dudow was in a sense trying to compensate for this omission. More fundamentally, he was suggesting that socialist élan was not equatable with adherence to official ethical strictures. In his public defense of the film, he noted, "Every place you hear complaints about the lack of morality among young people. That is only partly true. How often do you meet youths with strong ethical sensibilities, ... nevertheless, they commit errors?"<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps the same attitude that led functionaries to obsess over details such as a nude-bathing sequence caused them to ignore more fundamental objections to the film. If the SED regime had one saving grace, it was pragmatism. Despite Ulbricht's promise at the Fifth SED Congress that the GDR would surpass the Federal Republic in per capita consumption within thirty months, official growth projections were never so outlandish. The Cultural Revolution may have promised endless horizons by reconciling the poetic powers of art and labor, but, at least within the film industry, functionaries knew what was feasible in the short term. If nothing else, *Verwirrung der Liebe* was reasonably engaging and showed the GDR in an attractive light. The film answered a call by the regime for light entertainment of a socialist character that dated back to at least 1953. The work also clearly filled a gap in DEFA's overall program for 1959, which was shaping up very poorly. Even though DEFA could report a rare surfeit of "present-day" films set in the GDR, it was anticipated that most of these would bomb at the box office. Thus officials, even if they had their reservations about Dudow's film, probably realized that the industry had few alternatives to offer.

Whatever the case, Dudow insisted on reserving the last laugh in the public discussion of the film. In his rejoinder in *Forum*, he assumed a magnanimous attitude toward those who criticized *Verwirrung der Liebe*. "Some find the conclusion kitsch, others conventional," the director noted. For him, though, the very discussion generated by the scene demonstrated its success as "a 'happy end' that occasions a reflective attitude." Thus the film achieved the effect he had intended: "The one laughing is at the same time the one being laughed at." The director conceded that "no one, of course, accepts this consequence gladly." Even so he reminded his readers "We still must look after merriment, this strange plant, carefully, for it is indispensable for us and our society."<sup>47</sup> Alas, the director badly misjudged the power of his art. Not everyone found his film amusing. A minor scandal about cost overruns incurred during its production was about to show how very fragile Dudow's position was. Although the director ultimately escaped the controversy unscathed, signs of hostility against his person and what he represented as an artist were unmistakable.

### THE COST OVERRUN CONTROVERSY AND TENSIONS WITHIN THE STUDIO

The controversy about cost overruns on *Verwirrung der Liebe* began even before the work's official premiere. In October 1959, Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler, a radio commentator who later became notorious in both Germanies for his pompous delivery, published an article in *Deutsche Filmkunst* criticizing Dudow for expensive delays on the film. The critic insisted that all films, regardless of director, had to be completed on schedule for the studio to function properly. According to Schnitzler, DEFA workers were already quietly complaining about a special "Dudow slush fund" to cover losses on his films. The arrogant behavior of Dudow and other artists contradicted the spirit of socialism and endangered the principles of "internal plant democracy."<sup>48</sup>

Schnitzler apparently was acting on his own initiative. The Central Committee Cultural Section had scant sympathy with the critic when he complained about Dudow's publishing an acerbic ad hominem rejoinder.<sup>49</sup> As far as Arno Röder, the ZK apparatchik most directly responsible for the film industry, was concerned, an open fight between "two leading comrades" served no purpose and only brought profit to the "enemy." Already the Western papers were gleefully reporting the incident. Röder did not feel that the controversy surrounding *Verwirrung der Liebe* warranted higher-

level attention. In a summary prepared for his superior, Alfred Kurella, he emphasized, "We are not interested in losing Comrade Dudow for the film industry." DEFA was continuing an in-house investigation of the cost overruns, but Röder had already bluntly instructed the studio's party secretary not to bother him with the matter.<sup>50</sup>

If Schnitzler's polemic did not have the Party's endorsement, the resentment within the studio he described in his article was genuine. In his memo, Röder complained to Kurella of "a sectarian group within the studio which has contributed to broad anti-Dudow sentiment."<sup>51</sup> Certainly, there were reasons to be upset with Dudow. *Verwirrung der Liebe* had exceeded its original budget of 2,309,500 marks by over 925,000 marks.<sup>52</sup> These unanticipated expenditures had contributed to DEFA's not meeting its annual plan for 1959. This failure not only compromised the studio's good name as a socialist enterprise but also meant that many of its workers had to do without annual bonuses for that year.<sup>53</sup> While Dudow's project was hardly the studio's only headache, his flamboyant personality and thick Bulgarian accent<sup>54</sup> probably made him a convenient target for resentment.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, the conclusions of an initial internal studio report concerning the project were extremely critical of Dudow. The film's high costs were a function of the extremely long period required for its completion. Whereas a production schedule approved by DEFA's management in January 1958 foresaw 118 days of shooting over approximately a seven-month period, the project ultimately required 148 days over eleven months.<sup>56</sup> According to the report, these delays were attributable to Dudow's work habits and an obsession with artistic perfection that was incomprehensible to his collaborators.<sup>57</sup> The director's extravagance manifested itself in other ways as well. Instead of making maximum use of DEFA's workshops, Dudow contracted out work to art students. Delays resulted in nearly twice the planned outlay for extras.<sup>58</sup> The carnival sequence took twelve days longer to shoot than originally anticipated. Even though each day over budget cost nearly 25,000 marks, most of the additional footage obtained ended up in the waste bin.<sup>59</sup>

Dudow responded to this criticism with his own analysis of the cost overruns, which placed the blame mainly on DEFA's management. Dudow complained that he had been forced to rush the film into production in order to help meet annual plan objectives. For this reason, shooting commenced on August 31, when the season for shooting outdoors was far too advanced. The resulting weather delays alone totaled 300,000 marks.<sup>60</sup> Other problems arose once indoor work began because of poor-quality studio services. Sets were rarely available for prior inspection, so time was lost figuring out shots that should have been planned in advance.<sup>61</sup> Further delays occurred because sets had to be repaired, costumes replaced, props found, and studios properly heated. Finally, Dudow had unkind words for his production director, who, in his estimation, was the actual source of misunderstanding about the project.<sup>62</sup>

Eventually, Dudow got the better of his critics. A report prepared by the agency supervising the studio, the Vereinigung Volkseigener Betriebe Film (Cartel of People's Film Enterprises, VVB Film), blasted the studio's management, particularly Albert Wilkening, for failing to anticipate and correct problems on the project.<sup>63</sup> In addition, a special commission of the studio's internal Zentrale Parteileitung (Central Party Leadership, ZPL) recommended formal disciplinary measures against *Verwirrung der Liebe*'s production director. In contrast, the commission merely admonished Dudow to do a better job promoting "a healthy work atmosphere in a comradely fashion with the production director" on his next project.<sup>64</sup>

Not all DEFA directors found conforming to a budget as difficult as Dudow did. Some, such as Maetzig, even had a reputation for efficiency. Still, the controversy surrounding Dudow's film represented only an extreme manifestation of long-standing tensions within the studio. In many ways, DEFA as an institution had a split character. As a film studio, its most important constituency was made up of its artists. Even if management and the Party had the last say, the studio's ultimate success and failure depended on retaining and cultivating gifted filmmakers. Before the Berlin Wall was built, DEFA was in direct competition with Western studios for talent; the danger that an artist might take off for the West was always present. At the same time, the studio was also a socialist enterprise, where the proletariat was supposed to control the means of production. The SED insisted that workers were the ones who were really in charge. Nevertheless, the state-sponsored union in the studio lacked the respect of both the workers it represented and the management with which it was supposed to operate in a comradely rather than an adversarial fashion.<sup>65</sup>

Worker resentment toward artists had a long history in the studio. Whereas most DEFA employees lived on modest wages, directors and scriptwriters during the fifties could earn as much as 1,000,000 marks on a single film. Many

actors received generous monthly retainers regardless of whether they actually worked. Another cause of discontent that continued until the end of the decade was the presence of filmmakers from the West who received hard currency payments.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, artists not only were DEFA's best-paid employees; they also included the most influential and best-connected individuals in the studio. For example, even some of the studio's highest-ranking officials complained that they were unable to take stronger measures to contain costs on *Verwirrung der Liebe* because Dudow would have circumvented their authority by appealing to their superiors.<sup>67</sup>

Artists also played a more visible role within the studio's internal Party organization than other groups. Dudow, for one, was a long-standing member of the ZPL. At least during the fifties and early sixties, a far higher percentage of directors and other artists belonged to the Party than was the case with workers. The SED's own general statistics from this period show that "office workers [*Angestellte*] and intellectuals" constituted a disproportionate part of its membership rolls compared to simple workers.<sup>68</sup> In addition, Party membership, if not mandatory, was an important prerequisite for a high-level career in an ideologically sensitive organization such as a film studio. Filmmakers presumably faced greater pressure and had greater incentive to join the Party than studio employees involved in technical tasks did. The studio's factory political organization (BPO) also provided a convenient structure for monitoring and influencing the political attitude of artists. Each SED member belonged to an *Arbeitspolitische Organisation* (APO), or a cell organized by profession. These cells met regularly to consider current events or the situation in the studio. The studio's party secretary would then periodically prepare a summary of the APO discussion for review by either the SED's Potsdam district office cultural section.

Such reports often complained about "politically deviant tendencies" among artists. The problem that workers presented to the Party was, however, of a different order altogether: indifference and skepticism. If SED officials were upset with artists for being too eager to express a political opinion, they were hard pressed to find ways of drawing out the workers at all. In one report, the party secretary lamented: "Despite much effort the political mobilization could not be satisfactorily achieved in various areas of the stage, lighting, technical support, etc. . . . In the past only insufficient measures were undertaken by ZPL and APO leaders in order to increase party strength both quantitatively as well as qualitatively. For example, of 249 stage workers only eight are comrades; of 193 in lighting only twelve are; of 149 in the copying lab seventeen are."<sup>69</sup> According to the Party secretary, DEFA employees avoided "measures and political discussions for [the purpose of] increased production" by arguing that the studio's long-standing script shortage made their own efforts to increase efficiency moot.<sup>70</sup> Why should they bother improving their own work methods if the studio's artists were having difficulty coming up with enough viable projects anyway?

A VVB official investigating *Verwirrung der Liebe* reported that workers complained of a "double standard" in the studio's treatment of artists and themselves. Still, she concluded that "there was no sense asking [workers] about this in giant meetings because they have noticed over time that they will then be tripped up from behind in their work."<sup>71</sup> Worker dissatisfaction also seems to have expressed itself at times in behavior verging on luddism. One BPO report noted the need to constantly prove workers' "socialist consciousness" because "often available materials [and equipment] are so carelessly handled that losses occur where they are absolutely unnecessary."<sup>72</sup> In his analysis of *Verwirrung der Liebe*'s cost overruns, Dudow was also hardly the first or the last director to complain about shoddy workmanship. For example, several years earlier, the surly attitude of developing lab technicians had prompted Konrad Wolf to write a furious letter to the Hauptverwaltung Film (HV Film). When the director complained that the print of a nighttime scene had come out too light, the "colleague light measurer" claimed there was no need to correct the problem since he himself "had read newspapers by the sea at night." Other lab workers, having scratched negative footage, were so brazen as to suggest that the director travel to West Berlin to have the damage repaired.<sup>73</sup>

It is difficult to assess the significance of the problems Slatan Dudow and Konrad Wolf reported. Were such incidents so routine that they rarely occasioned comment, or were they fairly extreme manifestations of discord between artists and workers? That the studio hardly functioned harmoniously is clear. There was a considerable discrepancy between expectations and perceived reality as well as little sense of shared purpose. If an artist like Dudow was involved in an aesthetic endeavor with a sense of how the whole of it should come together, other studio employees, the majority of whom saw a film at most through a few of the many steps associated with its production, presumably approached their

work like any other job. They wanted to maximize their compensation and keep their routine as regular as possible. As Dudow complained in his cost overrun analysis, workers often earned more on bad films than on good ones. They had no interest in what they were producing.<sup>74</sup>

In a Western studio, such issues, if discussed at all, would have been at most a problem of employee morale; DEFA, however, purported to be a socialist concern. Its workers were supposed to be engaged in something more than the mere manufacture of a commodity. Through the process of collective production, studio employees were attaining a higher level of consciousness and bringing the dawn of the millennium ever nearer. The controversy surrounding *Verwirrung der Liebe's* filming highlighted the absurdity of DEFA's mission. Meeting the plan had spiritual, even mystical connotations. Failure in this regard was an affront to the whole socialist project. Yet success was largely measured in terms of bookkeeping minutiae which had little bearing on the industry's economic viability,<sup>75</sup> let alone the quality of the films actually produced or industrial production's status as a transcendent process. The workers' own interest in meeting official objectives was largely financial.

Officials were well aware of this discrepancy. Indeed, in the early sixties when DEFA came under increasing competition from television, they embraced an ambitious program of organizational reforms that promised the achievement of a truly socialist film studio, where art and industry would be one. Key to the reforms was the introduction of *Künstlerische Arbeitsgruppen* (KAGs), or artistic work groups, as a means of improving the studio's financial and artistic performance. Although couched in the language of the Cultural Revolution, the objective of the KAGs gradually allowed filmmakers to increase their autonomy from direct political supervision.

### DEFA'S PATH TO THE FUTURE?: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND ART

By the late fifties, DEFA was thriving as never before. Production was at record levels, with a total of thirty films completed in 1959.<sup>76</sup> The studio could also report significant progress in meeting ideological objectives. For the first time ever, its management could claim that a healthy majority of movies satisfied the important task of depicting life in the GDR.<sup>77</sup> At the same time, filmmakers were carrying on DEFA's established traditions of "antifascist" and "anti-imperialist" works with notable success. Konrad Wolf's *Sterne* (*Stars*, 1959), concerning the ill-fated love of a Wehrmacht soldier in occupied Bulgaria and a Jewish woman awaiting deportation, garnered a special prize at the Cannes Film Festival.<sup>78</sup> A very different film, Gottfried Kolditz's *Weisses Blut* (*White Blood*, 1959), attracted an exceptionally large audience with its slick depiction of the decadent West through the eyes of a likable young Bundeswehr officer suffering from radiation poisoning. In addition, DEFA was experimenting with new genres. Kurt Maetzig's science fiction drama, *Der schweigende Stern* (*The Silent Star*, 1959), based on a Stanislaw Lem novel, attracted a considerable audience, as did two other films by Günter Reisch, *Maibowle* (*Spring Punch*, 1959) and *Silvesterpunsch* (*New Year's Punch*, 1960), both musical comedies set in a chemical factory.

Despite these accomplishments, the studio was in no position to rest on its laurels. Officials were well aware that the vast majority of movies bearing DEFA's imprimatur were mediocre at best. Films set in the GDR itself, despite their rising number, were particularly weak. As DEFA's management readily conceded in a 1959 report concerning the studio's future objectives, "The artistic-ideological mastering of proper intentions by a considerable proportion of films remains unsatisfactory."<sup>79</sup> Many works tended to have plots that were "schematic" and "superficial." Despite repeated efforts, filmmakers had failed at the task of "bring[ing] onto the screen the figure of the German worker as the builder of socialism in the GDR in [the form of] unique, unmistakable characters."<sup>80</sup> Two years later, a Politburo resolution included virtually identical complaints. It found that the majority of "present-day" films did not "correspond to ideological-artistic needs of our audiences." The conclusion that the SED's highest functionaries drew from this circumstance was hardly inspiring: "Not second-rate films, but rather the great number of bad films, harm DEFA's reputation."<sup>81</sup>

The Party's own efforts to guide the studio's production by specially commissioning films for specific political celebrations or programs hardly helped matters. One work typical of the whole series of specially commissioned works, or *Auftragsfilme*, from the late fifties and early sixties was Johannes Arpe's *Erich Kubak* (1959).<sup>82</sup> This film told the story of an older worker who does battle with thick-headed managers in order to prove efficiency at the quarry where he works. Initial reviewers, realizing the importance the Party attached to the movie, praised it lavishly. Only Horst Knietzsch, the

film critic for the SED's official organ, *Neues Deutschland*, dared utter the truth: the movie was not very good. The critic was even harsher in his assessment of a second film celebrating the regime's renewed efforts at rural collectivization, Frank Beyer's *Eine alte Liebe* (*An Old Love*, 1959). This featured a female counterpart to the Kubak character, a woman whose tireless devotion to the collective farm she directs makes her husband feel neglected. According to Knietzsch, both works were "schematic" and "unconvincing." They failed to capture "the poetry of socialist life." About all he could do, was praise good intentions and counsel patience.<sup>83</sup>

The economic challenge facing the studio was at least as great as the ideological and artistic ones. By the beginning of 1959, 360,000 television sets existed in the GDR,<sup>84</sup> and film attendance was already in decline.<sup>85</sup> Even if DEFA's own balance sheet did not depend directly on box office revenues, the studio had to compete with a new institution, the Deutscher Fernsehfunk (DFF), or German Television Service, for scarce resources. For example, the studio was forced to cede its second-largest production facility, the former Tobis Studios in Berlin-Johannistal, to its fledging rival. Despite this loss, DEFA had pledged itself to increase its production to thirty-eight films a year by 1965. Finally, the studio's managers, like their counterparts around the globe, had concluded that the best strategy for their industry to withstand the onslaught from television was to emphasize qualities unique to the cinema by rendering the viewing experience as absorbing and sensually intense as possible. This objective in turn required the development and increased application of expensive technologies such as Totalvision and even 70mm cinematography. So DEFA found itself in the unenviable position of having to justify major investments to modernize inadequate facilities when audience size and the cinema's general importance were in decline.<sup>86</sup>

In the aftermath of the June 17 uprising in 1953, DEFA had been able to turn around a disastrous organizational situation by de-emphasizing ideological goals in favor of more modest economic ones. Similarly, the industry responded to the 1956 crisis by hiring West German directors to produce entertainment films as well as by increasing the percentage of Western films shown in the GDR's cinema. By the end of the decade, such a quick fix was no longer possible. First, the ideological offensive that had been under way in the GDR since the latter half of 1957 made cooperation with Westerners extremely difficult. Second, DEFA clearly had to respond to television's challenge by proving the unique worth of its product. As the GDR film industry's situation grew more serious, officials tended increasingly to stress the mutual interdependence of economic and ideological goals. The communion of art and industry went from being a vaguely defined ideal to an active principle for formulating concrete policy. The time had finally come, it was argued, to rid the studio of the last vestiges of capitalism and make it into a truly socialist enterprise. Management, workers, and artists all had to learn new means of cooperation and accomplishing tasks. DEFA would either solve all its woes—be they economic, ideological, or artistic—through a miracle of collective organization and communist élan or fail on all counts.

In many ways, DEFA's universal panacea, its secret weapon in its quest for financial solvency, artistic achievement, and political influence, was the institution of the KAGs. As discussed in the preceding chapter, these artistic production groups had been a topic of periodic debate within the industry since at least 1953. In the past, officials had resisted calls for them by artists, fearing that reorganizing the studio into production groups might lead to a breakdown of centralized political and economic authority. As late as the spring of 1958, upper-level functionaries had denounced the proposal in no uncertain terms. It is unclear what exact circumstances led to the regime's reversal by the end of that year, when steps toward implementing KAGs were already under way. Whatever the case, the expectations associated with these new institutional structures were seemingly unbounded.

In an article assessing the industry's prospects on the eve of the GDR's tenth anniversary, the head of the VVB Film, Ernst Hoffmann, emphasized that "the battle for the conquest of the audience" could be won only with "good and honest films." For this reason, KAGs assumed "an eminent meaning" in the next stage of the GDR cinema's development. Hoffmann predicted that such teams of directors, scriptwriters, dramaturges, production managers, and technical personnel would function as the "growth cells of socialist collective work." By bringing together those involved in all aspects of movie production, the KAGs would facilitate the appraisal of "the quality of films produced, artistic achievement, and economic expenditure as an inseparable unity." In addition, socialist filmmakers would "multiply their successes as soon as they learn[ed] from workers how tasks [could] be solved more quickly and more easily in creative collaboration."<sup>87</sup> In short, the contradictions between creative spontaneity and financial contingency and between

aesthetic experience and industrial organization would be suspended. Art and life would be one.

Obviously one reason that KAGs as an institution reaped such elaborate praise was ideological. The proposal fit in remarkably well with the aims of the regime's cultural policy. As such, it was only one of a number of initiatives being pursued within the studio in conjunction with the officially proclaimed Cultural Revolution. Others included sabbaticals for artists to spend time observing factory life, artists inviting worker brigades to visit the studio, the "adoption" of collective farms by the studio, established scriptwriters assisting "writing workers" (*schreibende Arbeiter*), and artist collaborations with amateur theater and performance groups.<sup>88</sup>

Unlike these other measures, the KAGs implied not only a gesture of solidarity between artists and workers, a symbolic sop to the regime's ideology, but also an actual overhaul of the studio's structure with considerable consequences for the exercise of authority. One of the main reasons for proposing the groups in the first place was the recognition that the studio's centralized management structure created bottlenecks that hindered further growth. In particular, increasing film production had made it virtually impossible for a single individual, the chief dramaturge, to supervise and approve every scenario, treatment, and script.<sup>89</sup> Decisive steps were necessary to increase the number of well-conceived scripts available, whose long-standing shortage, officials believed, was the root cause of the high incidence of low-quality productions.<sup>90</sup>

The KAGs were supposed to remedy those problems by creating forums where artists would, in effect, learn from each other through mutual criticism. Each group also had its own contingent of accountants and dramaturges, whose early involvement in projects was supposed to guarantee that financial and ideological objectives would be thoroughly integrated into the creative process. Obviously, certain safeguards existed to ensure central supervision. Dramaturges, whose role in the studio may in some ways be likened to that played by editors in a commercial publishing house, met regularly with DEFA's top management to discuss common objectives, and the studio director retained final say about which scripts would be released into production. Even so, the artist collectives were allowed considerable latitude in the initial stages of a project. Since script development was an expensive and lengthy process, this concession was of great significance. Studio managers and higher-level functionaries were far more loath to reject a finished script that represented, depending on the prominence of the writer and the rights involved, an investment of tens or even hundreds of thousands of marks than a roughly sketched scenario.

There was also talk that the KAGs might eventually become financially quasi-independent from the studio and that the size of each group's budgets would one day depend on the box office success of their respective films. Indeed, by 1965, concrete steps were already under consideration for implementing such a proposal,<sup>91</sup> when the Eleventh Plenum led to an abrupt return to more centralized management. Most of the KAGs, which had grown from an initial three to seven in number, continued in name, but they now were little more than dramaturge teams. Fearful of losing political control and the possible consequences of allowing artists too much autonomy, the Party did not hesitate to abandon the ambitious attempt at instituting artistic collectives. Still, the seriousness with which the DEFA had pursued KAGs as a concrete reform strategy is measurable through the progressive decentralization of studio management during the early sixties.<sup>92</sup>

At the beginning of the decade, however, the Eleventh Plenum was still a long way off. The studio was embarking on an ambitious reform program, of which the KAGs were the most significant but by no means the sole component. Well aware of the type of problems that had arisen during the filming of *Verwirrung der Liebe*, film industry officials implemented further policies with an eye toward establishing greater harmony between industry and art. Payment of directors' salaries now became dependent on their meeting deadlines and budgets in a timely fashion. Efforts were made to interest technical workers in the artistic and ideological aspects of filmmaking by showing them rushes of work in progress.<sup>93</sup> Above all, an attempt was undertaken to mobilize workers through the Party, the FDJ, and the state union in greater numbers, in the hope that political élan would result in more efficient and effective production. Finally, significant personnel changes were made at the end of 1961. Albert Wilkening, deemed a competent manager but lacking the requisite political leadership qualities, was demoted once again to production director. Jochen Mückenberger, a young ZK functionary, replaced him as studio director. A new Party secretary was appointed.<sup>94</sup> These joined the new chief dramaturge, Klaus Wischnewski, who had started at the studio the previous year.

Such efforts were not in vain. As early as the winter of 1961, the studio's Party secretary could report with enthusiasm

to his superiors that “undeniably a new creative atmosphere has developed in the studio through the bringing together of artistic talent. Productive debates about works in progress are constantly taking place in the groups.”<sup>95</sup> Indeed, even today many filmmakers remember the KAGs as genuine sites of artistic collaboration, and the years leading up to the Eleventh Plenum were arguably DEFA’s most creative and diverse. The film historian and former dramaturge Erika Richter, for example, has described this era of the studio’s history as “amazingly multifarious in [terms of] themes, subjects, and stylistic variety” when compared with later years. In her estimation, “The early sixties for many directors and authors were a period of uninhibited testing of their possibility and talents, and they dared original and risky ventures.”<sup>96</sup>

The itch for experimentation expressed itself not only in the political boldness of some of the Plenum films but more broadly in a wide variety of movies ranging from musicals to adventure films and satires. For the first and probably only time, DEFA was on the verge of developing a true popular cinema, replete with a number of engaging stars such as Angelika Domröse, Erwin Geschonneck, Manfred Krug, Jutta Hoffmann, and Armin Mueller-Stahl.<sup>97</sup> One of the more outlandish films made during this period was Günter Reisch’s *Ach, du fröhliche* (*Oh, You Merry One*, 1962). This East German equivalent of *Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?* told the story of an old comrade, a factory director, whose daughter brings home a fiancé openly disenchanted with the GDR. The work is also perhaps the only pre-1989 DEFA film ever to contain a satiric reference to the Stasi—a strange irony indeed because after the Wende its author, Hermann Kant, was revealed to have been a secret police informant himself. Another comedy with a quite original premise was Frank Vogel’s *Der Mann mit dem Objektiv* (*The Man with the Lens*, 1961), which concerned a time traveler from a future socialist utopia who visits the GDR and is shocked by its backwardness. At the same time, Frank Beyer established himself as one of the studio’s leading directors with a trio of antifascist films, including the internationally well-received *Nackt unter Wölfen* (*Naked among Wolves*, 1963), based on a novel by Bruno Apitz concerning a child hidden by concentration camp inmates. Yet another director who came into his own during this period was Ralf Kirsten, whose specialty was light entertainment. His greatest success was *Mir nach, Canailen* (*Follow Me, Scoundrels*, 1964). For better or worse, this work was a worthy addition to a certain genre of comic historical adventure films, featuring busty women in tight corsets and sword-fighting cavaliers, the prototype of which was the Gina Lollobrigida classic *Fan Fan la Tulipe* (Christian-Jacque, 1952).<sup>98</sup> Even on economic grounds, there was reason for hope at DEFA. In 1964, the studio could report for the first time in several years that two of its films were among the top ten box office successes in the GDR. Average film attendance was also up considerably, from 500,000 to 640,000.<sup>99</sup> In 1965, DEFA even reversed the overall decline in attendance at its films.<sup>100</sup>

Obviously, the KAGs were not the only factor responsible for these developments. Even at their prime directly before the Plenum, there was a certain discrepancy between the KAGs’ theory and practice. Although seven KAGs eventually were established, many sporting heroic Communist monikers such as “Red Circle” or “Concrete,” not all attained a critical mass of engaged members. The most successful groups were also generally those which attracted existing talent. In addition, the KAGs never embraced technicians or common studio workers but were generally limited to directors, scriptwriters, dramaturges, and production managers. Even before the Plenum, the groups’ main function was script development. Camera operators, set designers, and actors played at best a peripheral role in some groups. Technical service divisions of the studio—such as the stage crew, lighting, props, or the set shop—continued to be centrally organized.

In short, the KAGs only very imperfectly approximated the union of labor and art envisioned by the regime in declaring a Cultural Revolution. Their success probably had far more to do with the studio’s decentralization, the somewhat relaxed cultural political climate after the construction of the Wall, and the enlightened tenure of studio director Jochen Mückenberger than with the application of socialist principles. It was obviously no accident that previous proposals for artist collectives in the studio had coincided with the great political crises of 1953 and 1956. Regardless of the language in which the KAGs were clothed, their ultimate effect and purpose was relaxed political supervision and greater artistic autonomy. For whatever reasons, the regime at the end of the decade was ready to grant from a position of strength what it had previously considered only under shaky circumstances.

Curiously, Dudow himself was not particularly enthusiastic about the KAGs. During the 1958 Activists’ Convention, he roundly criticized Maetzig for having floated the proposal and proudly noted that he himself, even at the height of the 1956

crisis, had resisted the idea.<sup>101</sup> Dudow may simply have been protecting himself from criticism at the expense of a fellow artist; *Verwirrung der Liebe*, however, suggests that his dislike for the KAGs might well have been principled. After all, the film insists on the very barrier the KAGs promised to abolish, the one between the “green” world of desire and everyday existence, utopian aspirations and pragmatic possibility. Despite his reputation for being an extravagant artist, Dudow may have been enough of a realist to recognize that antagonism between art and politics was unavoidable. Certainly, he had probably seen enough in his long and varied career to realize that filmmakers given too much rope could easily hang themselves. Whatever Dudow’s position on this matter may have been, *Verwirrung der Liebe* was a comedy in which the protagonists’ passage through an unattainable realm of boundless possibility ends not in disappointment but in the redemption of their normal world. By contrast, DEFA’s experiment with artistic collectives would end if not in outright tragedy—the nobility of the heroes is questionable—then in bitter frustration and estrangement at the Eleventh Plenum.

### CONCLUSION

A disciple of Brecht, Dudow believed in the power of art to stimulate political consciousness. Even if *Verwirrung der Liebe* was formally conventional, the director was clearly interested in using humor to encourage East Germans to step back and see their society in a different light. As my interpretation suggests, the issue at which Dudow took aim was socialism’s utopian aspirations. His picture honored the Cultural Revolution proclaimed by the regime more as an ideal than a social fact. By assigning the union of intellect and brawn, symbolized by the bride swap in the picture, to the realm of desire rather than reality, Dudow seems to have been reminding his audience that the attainment of true socialism was for the time being only a goal—a beautiful vision of harmony and freedom not a normative model that could be enforced by fiat.

Determining the relation between ideological ambitions and actual life was of obvious significance in a millennialist state. Insisting on the identity of the two justified calls for increased social discipline. Thus many commentators in the press complained that the characters in *Verwirrung der Liebe* did not conform to the regime’s standards for model citizens. Similarly, many in the studio resented Dudow’s flamboyant personality and his disregard for financial discipline and other restraints to which everyone else had to submit.

Even so, official toleration of the picture suggests a pragmatic attitude toward the exercise of power. At the very least, *Verwirrung der Liebe* was an entertaining film that showed the GDR in a favorable light. Dudow may have been a living reminder of the radical modernism of the Weimar era that the Party had come to disown, but his latter films were conventional in form and consistent with postwar Communism’s cultural conservatism. No longer in opposition but now the zealous master of an embattled state, the SED favored *kleinbürgerlich* values emphasizing discipline and order as embodied in Walter Ulbricht’s Ten Moral Commandments. Ultimately, the appearance of order and harmony implicit in *Verwirrung der Liebe*’s classical structure took precedence over doctrinal niceties in official eyes. Party leaders fixated on the nude-bathing and carnival scenes, which seemed to endorse an undisciplined, bohemian lifestyle, but ignored the film’s ending, which arguably challenged the Cultural Revolution platform.

While the regime’s insistence on the possibility of harmonic progress was generally repressive, it could on occasion legitimize change. In this way, filmmakers were able to use the language of the Cultural Revolution in order to justify the establishment of artistic work groups (KAGs) in the late 1950s. Over the next few years, this reform gradually allowed artists a measure of autonomy from political interference and greater influence in the studio’s management. The KAGs were also partly responsible for the cinematic revival experienced at DEFA during the early sixties. As subsequent chapters describe, some directors would use newfound creative latitude to explore cautiously the fissures lurking behind the official facade of monolithic social unity. Integral to this process was the development of an alternative image of East German society as a means of reconciling uncomfortable issues with continuing loyalty to the GDR. In this new vision, the utopian realm of desire celebrated by Dudow in *Verwirrung der Liebe* would not disappear altogether, but it would become increasingly subordinate to the exigencies of everyday life. [...]

**Joshua Feinstein** taught European history at Stanford University and Emory University, before changing his careers. He studied law at the New York University School of Law and has since worked as a lawyer in Buffalo, New York.

The DEFA Film Library thanks Joshua Feinstein for his permission to use this text on its DVD release of *Love's Confusion*. Permission to reprint the text was authorized by the author. Every effort was made to reach the publishing house without success.

- <sup>1</sup> Walter Ulbricht. "Was ist das Wichtigste?" *Sonntag*, November 15, 1959.
- <sup>2</sup> Slatan Dudow. "Die Heiterkeit und das Schöne." *Sonntag*, January 10, 1960.
- <sup>3</sup> The secondary literature on Slatan Dudow's life is limited. Hermann Herlinghaus. *Slatan Dudow*. Berlin: Henschel-Verlag, 1965. is still useful despite its tendentious nature. The lengthiest Western treatment of his life is Yves Aubry. "Slatan Dudow 1903-1963." *Anthology du cinéma* 6 (1971). 385-440.
- <sup>4</sup> For a discussion of Dudow's relationship to Brecht, see Wesselin Natew. "Slatan Dudow in den dreissiger und vierziger Jahren." *Beiträge zur Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft* 23, no. 5 (1982). 6-46.
- <sup>5</sup> "Die Komödie und ihre gesellschaftliche Bedeutung" was originally published as an introduction to his play *Das Narrenparadies* under the pseudonym Stefan Brodwin. The essay is reprinted, as part of a special issue devoted to Dudow, in *Beiträge zur Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft*, 23, no. 5 (1982): 173-87, here 183.
- <sup>6</sup> See Ralf Schenk. "Mitten im kalten Krieg 1955-1960." *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg*. Berlin: Henschel-Verlag, 1994. 118. A script fragment is reproduced in *Beiträge zur Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft*, 23, no. 5 (1982).
- <sup>7</sup> A short-film comedy genre did, however, flourish in East Germany during the fifties and early sixties. The so-called *Stacheltierfilme*, or "porcupine films," were designed to poke gentle fun at socialist society, taking aim in particular at examples of backward-thinking behavior. See Sylvia Klötzer and Siegfried Lokatis. "Criticism and Censorship: Negotiating Cabaret Performance and Book Production." *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*. Ed. by Konrad Jarausch. New York: Berghahn, 1999. 241-64.
- <sup>8</sup> Films that fall into the first category include *Alter Kahn und junge Liebe* (Hans Heinrich, 1957) and *Meine Frau macht Musik* (Hans Heinrich, 1957). The second category might have encompassed *Saure Wochen – frohe Feste* (Wolfgang Schleif, 1950), *Modell Bianka* (Richard Groschopp, 1951), and *Junges Gemüse* (Günter Reisch, 1956). Also see the interview with Dudow, "Menschengestaltung. Lebensnähe und Standort des Künstlers." *Deutsche Filmkunst* 5 (1957). 355-56. Here, the director lamented the nearly complete lack of successful DEFA comedies, a circumstance that he attributed to filmmakers not having a sufficiently "light hand." At the same time, Dudow affirmed the need for politically committed art.
- <sup>9</sup> "Die Komödie und ihre gesellschaftliche Bedeutung," as reprinted in *Beiträge zur Film- und Fernsehwissenschaft*, 23, no. 5 (1982): 173-87, here 183.
- <sup>10</sup> Northrop Frye. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957. 163
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 185. The sixth phase corresponds to the collapse of that society. Its object is the real of the ghost stories and gothic romances.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 181-84.
- <sup>14</sup> HV Film Filmproduktion, unnumbered protocol, October 3, 1959, located in the "Abnahme" file for *Verwirrung der Liebe*, BA Film.
- <sup>15</sup> Albert Wilkening to the Abnahmekommission, September 26, 1959. BA Berlin DR117 1929 (Zentrale Analysengruppe).
- <sup>16</sup> See Wilkening to Ernst Hoffmann, director of the VVB film, October 1, 1959, BA Berlin DR117 1929 (Zentrale Analysengruppe).
- <sup>17</sup> Aktenvermerk, signed Wilkening and Dudow, October 3, 1959, BA Berlin DR117 1929 (Zentrale Analysengruppe).
- <sup>18</sup> Konrad Schwalbe, interview by author, tape recording, Potsdam, April 24, 1993. Schwalbe was present at the meeting in his capacity as DEFA's chief dramaturg.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> Annekathrin Bürger, who played Sonja, and her husband, Ralf Römer, interview by author, tape recording, Berlin, August 18, 1993. Apparently, Dudow made passes at both his leading ladies while filming *Verwirrung der Liebe*.
- <sup>21</sup> Joel Agee. *Twelve Years: An American Boyhood in East Germany*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1982. 149-50.
- <sup>22</sup> See Kurt Starke. "Die Republik der Nackten." *Woche*, July 22, 1993.
- <sup>23</sup> See "Aktennotiz," October 24, 1959, signed Wilkening and Dudow, BA Berlin DR117 1929 (Zentrale Analysengruppe, Kollege Zunft).
- <sup>24</sup> *Greif zur Feder, Kumpel: Protokoll der Autorenkonferenz der Mitteldeutschen Verlages Halle am 24. April 1959 im Kulturpalast des elektrochemischen Kombinats Bitterfeld*. Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1959. 100-102.
- <sup>25</sup> "Rede Walter Ulbrichts vor Schriftstellern, Brigaden der sozialistischen Arbeit und Kulturschaffenden in Bitterfeld, 24. April 1959." *Dokumente zur Kunst-, Literatur- und Kulturpolitik der SED*, 1:552.
- <sup>26</sup> "Die Kunst des guten Lachens: Zu dem DEFA Film 'Verwirrung der Liebe' von Slatan Dudow." *Neues Deutschland*, November 28, 1959.
- <sup>27</sup> Letter of Klausdieter Wernecke. *Sonntag*, January 10, 1960.
- <sup>28</sup> These included Ekkehard Walter, *Junge Welt*, December 1, 1959. See also the letter of Klausdieter Wernecke, *Sonntag*, January 10, 1960.
- <sup>29</sup> See Slatan Dudow's response to his critics. "Das Heitere ernst betrachtet: Ein kleiner Beitrag zur Entwirrung der Verwirrung." *Forum*, January 21, 1960.
- <sup>30</sup> Letter von Willy Walther, *Forum*, December 17, 1959.
- <sup>31</sup> Letter of Hiltrud Oehlschlägel, *Sonntag*, February 21, 1960.
- <sup>32</sup> Letter of Anni Rafeld, *Sonntag*, February 21, 1960.
- <sup>33</sup> Horst Knietzsch. "Die Kunst des guten Lachens." *Neues Deutschland*, November 28, 1959.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> Christoph Funke. "Ein Faschingsball und seine Folgen." *Der Morgen*, October 10, 1959.
- <sup>36</sup> Letter of Ekkehard Walter, *Junge Welt*, December 1, 1959.
- <sup>37</sup> Letter of Klausdieter Wernecke, *Sonntag*, January 10, 1960.
- <sup>38</sup> Letter of Magarete Kühnhackl, *Sonntag*, January 10, 1960.
- <sup>39</sup> Letter of Harry Siebers, *Sonntag*, March 27, 1960.
- <sup>40</sup> Winfried Junge. "Sind wir so?" *Forum*, December 3, 1959. Junge himself went on to have a distinguished career as a documentarist. He is best known for *Die Kinder von Golzow*, a series of films following a group of individuals through various life stages from early childhood to adulthood.
- <sup>41</sup> Fred Seeger and Brigitta Staaman. "Unser Ja zu diesem Film." *Forum*, December 17, 1959.
- <sup>42</sup> Kurt Starke. "Die Republik der Nackten." *Woche*, July 22, 1993.
- <sup>43</sup> See Aktennotiz, signed Dudow and Wilkening, October 24, 1959, BA Berlin DR117 1929 (Zentrale Analysengruppe).
- <sup>44</sup> See Slatan Dudow. "Das Heitere ernst betrachtet." *Forum*, January 21, 1960. I have not yet attempted to research this incident independently.
- <sup>45</sup> *Das Protokoll des V. Parteitages der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands*. 1:160.
- <sup>46</sup> Slatan Dudow. "Die Heiterkeit und das Schöne." *Sonntag*, January 10, 1960.
- <sup>47</sup> Slatan Dudow. "Das Heitere ernst betrachtet." *Forum*, January 21, 1960.
- <sup>48</sup> Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler. "Vor dem 10. Jahrestag: Einige Gedanken zur Situation des DEFA-Spielfilms." *Deutsche Filmkunst* 7, no. 9 (1959). 258-59.

## A Case of Love Confused?

- <sup>49</sup> See Slatan Dudow. "Missbrauch der Kritik." *Deutsche Filmkunst* 7, no. 10 (1959). 329.
- <sup>50</sup> Arno Röder. "Aktennotiz für Gen. Alfred Kurella." December 24, 1959, SAPMO DY30 IV2/906/222 (ZK Kultur).
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>52</sup> VVB Film, Abteilung Filmproduktion, "Abschlussergebnis der Untersuchungen der Kommission der VVB Film über die Verantwortung des Direktionskollektives im Spielfilmstudio für das Filmprojekt *Verwirrung der Liebe*." June 30, 1960, BA Berlin DR117 1929 (Zentrale Analysengruppe, Kollege Zunft).
- <sup>53</sup> See the report of the SED district office: "Bürovorlage: Einschätzung der Abteilung Volksbildung/Kultur zur Bürovorlage der Parteileitung des VEB DEFA-Studio für Spielfilme." December 21, 1959, SAPMO DY30 IV2/ 906/ 211 (ZK Kultur).
- <sup>54</sup> Konrad Schwalbe, interview by author, tape recording, Potsdam, April 24, 1993.
- <sup>55</sup> See also Slatan Dudow to the Zentrale Parteileitung der SED, DEFA-Studio für Spielfilme, October 2, 1961, SAPMO DY30 IV2/906/222 (ZK Kultur).
- <sup>56</sup> Abteilung Produktionsvorbereitung und Wirtschaftskontrolle, "Bericht über die Prüfung des Spielfilms 'Verwirrung der Liebe.'" n.d., 1-2, BA Berlin DR117 1929 (Zentrale Analysengruppe, Kollege Zunft).
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid., 4. 58.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid., 7-8.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., 2.
- <sup>60</sup> Slatan Dudow. "Stellungnahme zum Produktionsablauf des Films *Verwirrung der Liebe*." June 12, 1960, 4, 7, SAPMO DY30 IV2/ 906/222 (ZK Kultur).
- <sup>61</sup> Ibid., 5-6.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid., 10-15.
- <sup>63</sup> Abteilung Filmproduktion, VVB Film. "Abschlussergebnis der Untersuchungen der Kommission der VVB Film über die Verantwortung des Direktionskollektives im Spielfilmstudio für das Filmprojekt *Verwirrung der Liebe*." June 20, 1960, BA Berlin DR1 4042 (Abteilung Filmproduktion).
- <sup>64</sup> "Vorlage für die Zentrale Parteileitungssitzung am 28.6.1960." June 27, 1960, BA Berlin DR1 4042 (Abteilung Filmproduktion).
- <sup>65</sup> Scattered complaints about the union's ineffectiveness can be found in numerous documents from the late 1950s and early 1960s. For example, during a December 16, 1959, studio direction meeting, a union representative complained not only about artists' "underestimating" the union's importance but also about a lack of "clarity between the Party and the union." In the end, his organization always got stuck with "minor tasks, like bringing ashtrays, etc." "Protokoll über die Direktionssitzung am 16. Dezember 1959." December 18, 1958, BA Berlin DR117 A/091. See also similar complaints in the report of the Potsdam SED. "Bürovorlage: Einschätzungen der Abteilung Volksbildung/Kultur zur Bürovorlage der Parteileitung des VEB DEFA-Studios für Spielfilme." December 21, 1959. SAPMO DY30 IV2/ 906/ 211 (ZK Kultur).
- <sup>66</sup> See Zentrale Kommission für Staatliche Kontrolle. "Bericht über die Themen- und Produktionsplanung sowie die Verpflichtung von Künstlern im VEB DEFA-Studio für Spielfilme in Potsdam-Babelsberg." March 19, 1956, SAPMO DY30 IV2/ 2026/ 77 (Büro Kurella).
- <sup>67</sup> VVB Film, Ökonomie und Planung, "Feststellung zum Film *Verwirrung der Liebe*." June 30, 1960, BA Berlin DR1 4042 (Abteilung Filmproduktion).
- <sup>68</sup> Hartmut Zimmermann. *DDR-Handbuch*. Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Volk, 1985. 950-51.
- <sup>69</sup> SED-Betriebsorganisation des DEFA-Studios für Spielfilme. "Betr.: Bisherige Ergebnisse bei der Durchführung des Beschlusses des Politbüros zu Fragen des Spielfilmschaffens in der DDR vom Oktober 1961." April 17, 1962, 4, SAPMO DY30 IV2/ 906/ 211 (ZK Kultur).
- <sup>70</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>71</sup> Ruth Breitenbach. "Betr.: 'Verwirrung der Liebe.' Wo es zur Verkehrung Arbeitsverhdt. Bestimmungen kam." June 29, 1960, BA Berlin DR1 4143 (Abteilung Filmproduktion).
- <sup>72</sup> APO I, "Über die Ursachen des Zurückbleibens unserer nationalen Filmproduktion." November 2, 1960, 5, SAPMO DY30 IV2/ 906/211 (ZK Kultur).
- <sup>73</sup> Konrad Wolf to HV Film, January 31, 1956, BA Berlin DR1 4143 (Sekretariat des Leiters). The film involved was *Genesung*.
- <sup>74</sup> Slatan Dudow. "Stellungnahme zum Produktionsablauf des Films 'Verwirrung der Liebe.'" June 12, 1960, SAPMO DY30 IV2/ 906/ 222 (ZK Kultur).
- <sup>75</sup> DEFA had essentially a captive market. Its distributors, Progress Filmverleih and DEFA-Aussenhandel, were required to purchase its films at prices determined in the plan. In addition, it is difficult to assess the exact significance of a balance sheet and money in an economy of scarcity where prices were fixed.
- <sup>76</sup> This figure is derived from the catalog of the former Staatliche Filmarchiv, DEFA-Spielfilme 1946-1964. And includes four made-for-television movies produced under contract with the Deutsche Fernsehfunk (DFF). *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg* lists twenty-seven films for the year exclusive of the DFF productions.
- <sup>77</sup> VEB DEFA-Studio für Spielfilm, "Künstlerisch-ideologische Perspektivplan bis 1965." 1, BA Berlin DR117 2324 (Hauptdirektor).
- <sup>78</sup> This was a Bulgarian coproduction, scripted by the Bulgarian writer Angel Wagenstein.
- <sup>79</sup> VEB DEFA-Studio für Spielfilm, "Künstlerisch-ideologische Perspektivplan bis 1965." 1, BA Berlin DR117 2324 (Hauptdirektor).
- <sup>80</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>81</sup> "Anlage Nr. 1 zum Protokoll Nr. 52 vom 9.10.61." 2-3, SAPMO DY30 J IV2/ 2-794 (PB Sitzungen). Ironically, one of the few *Gegenwartsfilme* praised in the resolution was *Verwirrung der Liebe*, even though this work's production history was hardly in keeping with the Politburo's call for increased efficiency.
- <sup>82</sup> Other *Auftragsfilme* include *Die Entscheidung des Dr. Ahrendts* (Frank Vogel, 1959), *Kapitäne bleiben am Bord* (Martin Hellberg, 1959), *Senta auf Abwegen* (Martin Hellberg, 1959), *Musterknaben* (Johannes Kittel, 1959), *Ärzte* (Lutz Kohlert, 1960), *Alwin der Letzte* (Hubert Hoelzke, 1960), *Kein Ärger mit Cleopatra* (Helmut Schneider, 1960), and *Zu jeder Stunde* (Heinz Thiel, 1960). See Ralf Schenk. "Mitten im kalten Krieg 1955-1960." 143.
- <sup>83</sup> Horst Knietzsch. "Die 'Neue Welle' aus den Babelsberger Ateliers." *Neues Deutschland*, October 10, 1959.
- <sup>84</sup> VEB Progress Film-Vertrieb. "Analyse zum Stand der Planerfüllung im 1. Quartal 1959." May 11, 1959, SAPMO DY30 NL 109/ 96 (Nachlass Ackermann). This report predicted that by 1963 one-third of GDR households would be equipped with televisions. It also noted that television owners tended immediately after making their purchase to avoid movies but eventually returned to cinemas to view films that either were unavailable on television or supplemented the offerings there. The report concluded that recouping audiences lost to television would be possible only through improving the quality of individual motion pictures.
- <sup>85</sup> Between 1957 and 1958, the number of cinema visits per capita in the GDR declined from January 18 to August 15. In 1959, this figure declined again to September 14. See VVB Film. "Kurze Einschätzung über die Erfüllung der politisch-ideologischen Aufgaben in Filmverleih." February 12, 1960, SAPMO DY30 IV2/ 906/ 249 (ZK Kultur).
- <sup>86</sup> VEB DEFA-Studio für Spielfilm. "Künstlerisch-ideologische Perspektivplan bis 1965." BA Berlin DR117 2324 (Hauptdirektor). Due to the shortage of hard currency, the GDR film industry committed itself to independently developing 70mm production capabilities. This project, after years of trial and error, was a technical success, but a financial disaster.
- <sup>87</sup> Ernst Hoffmann. "Errichtet neue Höhe in der Filmkunst." *Deutsche Filmkunst* 7, no. 10 (October 1959). 297-98.
- <sup>88</sup> See VEB DEFA-Studio für Spielfilme, SED Betriebsorganisation. "Bürovorlage," December 21, 1959, SAPMO DY30 IV2/ 906/ 211 (ZK Kultur).
- <sup>89</sup> Konrad Schwalbe, interview by author, tape recording, Potsdam, April 24, 1993; Klaus Wischnewski, interview by author, tape recording, Berlin, March 1 and 15, 1993, and August 2, 1993.
- <sup>90</sup> VEB DEFA-Studio für Spielfilm. "Künstlerisch-ideologische Perspektivplan bis 1965." 2, BA Berlin DR117 2324 (Hauptdirektor); "Anlage Nr. 1 zum Protokoll Nr. 52 vom 9.10.61." SAPMO DY30 J IV2/ 2-794 (PB Sitzungen). See also VVB Film, Abteilung Produktion. "Auszug aus dem Protokoll der 13. Kollegiumssitzung am Dienstag dem 8.12.59." BA Berlin DR1 4437.
- <sup>91</sup> See HV Film, Abteilung Lichtspielwesen. "Studie zur Verwirklichung des neuen ökonomischen Systems der Planung und Leitung in Film- und Lichtspielwesen." section III, BA Berlin DR1 4231.
- <sup>92</sup> Jochen Mückenberger, interview by author, tape recording, Babelsberg, April 27, 1993; Klaus Wischnewski, interview by author, tape recording, Berlin, March 1 and 15, 1993, and August 2, 1993.
- <sup>93</sup> Wilkening to Abusch, August 31, 1960, 2, BA Berlin DR117 A/ 150. It is unclear from this document if such showings actually occurred. Also see the Politburo's 1961 resolution that placed an emphasis on the "materielle Intensivierung der Filmschaffenden" and on the need for a better system of economic incentive. "Anlage Nr. 1 zum Protokoll Nr. 52 vom 9.10.61." 10, SAPMO DY30 J IV2/ 2-794 (PB Sitzungen). Attempts at reforming artists' salaries went back to at least 1957. See HV Film, Film Produktion. "Aktennotiz," June 19, 1957. SAPMO DY30 NL 109/97 (Nachlass Ackermann).

## A Case of Love Confused?

<sup>94</sup> See "Anlage Nr. 1 zum Protokoll Nr. 52 vom 9.10.61." 6, SAPMO DY30 J IV2/2-794 (PB Sitzungen).

<sup>95</sup> Zentrale Parteileitung. "Aufgaben und Stand der Entwicklung der sozialistischen künstlerischen Arbeitsgruppen im VEB DEFA-Studio für Spielfilme." SAPMO DY30 J IV2/906/211 (ZK Kultur).

<sup>96</sup> Erika Richter. "Zwischen Mauerbau und Kahlschlag." *Das zweite Leben der Filmstadt Babelsberg*. Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1994. 159.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. In fact, as the star of the popular television series *Liebling Kreuzberg*, Manfred Krug later became a major celebrity in the West. Armin Mueller-Stahl, also had a prominent career in the West. The other actors remain popular in the East today.

<sup>98</sup> I am indebted to Erika Richter for explaining the history of this genre to me.

<sup>99</sup> The two films were *Der geteilte Himmel* (Konrad Wolf, 1964) and *Mir nach, Canaillen* (Ralf Kirsten, 1964). See "Vorlage an das Politbüro des ZKs der SED, betr: Entwicklungsstand, Probleme sowie Hauptaufgaben des Film- und Lichtspielwesens der DDR bis zum Jahre 1970." June 22, 1965, BA Berlin DR1117 A/240.

<sup>100</sup> "Analyse über die Erfüllung der staatlichen Aufgaben 1965 im Bereich der Hauptverwaltung Film." BA Berlin DR1 4265 (HV Film, Abteilung Filmproduktion). Of course, the damage had already been done. Between 1958 and 1964, overall attendance at DEFA films dropped 60.6 percent. DEFA's market share was also down during this period from 21.5 percent to 17.5 percent of movie tickets sold in the GDR. Ministerrat der DDR, Ministerium der Finanzen, "Analyse über die Entwicklung des Film- und Lichtspielwesens." n.d., BA Berlin DA 1 2977/68.

<sup>101</sup> "Stenographische Niederschrift der Parteiaktivtagung der Parteiorganisation der DEFA am 15. April 1958." SAPMO DY30 IV2/906/226 (ZK Kultur), lf. 65-67.

