**Research**

In the summer of 2009, my partner and I began to research my grandfather through various archives. We began in Trier: birth certificates, buildings, companies and restitution-issues. Almost nothing was known about him except that he had four siblings. A sister-in-law survived Theresienstadt; my grandfather's siblings didn't survive.

The research completely captivated us and naturally that interested the family too. We travelled around with photos, documents, and artifacts in our luggage and brought them to each of our cousins. The idea to make a documentary film about my family was born. We didn't simply decide to make the film, rather the topic and the research took hold of us, and after a year we were so deeply involved that we didn't want to stop digging.

**Motivation**

Perhaps in the end, I wanted to exonerate myself and my family. As a child, I already identified with this Jewish grandfather. And now I needed him in order to connect with my cousins and get to know them.

I created a time delayed Systemic Family Constellations in front of running cameras, in order to find my position in the family. Creating the film in the face of internal and external resistance required all our strength and energy. Presenting the film publicly is a self-assertive act, and I hope that members of my family will join me.

**Cousins**

On the one hand, the research uncovered innumerable new facts (at one point our personal archive contained 5000 documents and photos). On the other hand, we didn't want to document the circumstantial evidence of my grandfather's persecution. I absolutely didn't want to make a detective film where every artifact evokes surprise and every object found in a basement is dramatized.

Because we didn't want to interview eyewitnesses, my father and his brothers are featured less. The uncertainty of my generation interested me much more. After all, in the course of time each of us has developed an attitude towards the Holocaust and its effect on his or her family. However, this is almost never spoken about; it is unapproachable territory and doesn't allow for direct questioning. Even getting close was a balancing act on thin ice and required a lot of time.

The relationship to the ten cousins grew over time and became strong enough for the myriad demands I had waiting for them. All but one cousin agreed to step in front of the camera, and approve publication. The film is a collective effort; prepared over a long time by my partner and me. Support and engagement grew over time.

**Set-up**

We decided that we would film each cousin only once. We wanted to leave our protagonists plenty of room. They suggested the filming locations themselves. I asked almost no questions. We left them generally in the dark about what we expected, since we didn't expect anything.

I also didn't hide my own uncertainty. We waited patiently to see what they brought forth. What might it be? What should I say then?

Once one is drawn into a train of thought, the situation has a special significance. This gives rise to big surprises, and this approach best matches our ideal documentary truthfulness.

**Taboo**

When confronted with a traumatic experience that lasts and affects several generations, as is the case of the Holocaust in one's own family, then direct, naive questions about guilt, shame, and identity miss the point entirely. It's naive to believe one can get people who have been silent for 70 years and have passed this silence on to their children to speak just because someone from the family sets up a camera. The personal consequences of the Holocaust lead to complex, contradictory positions, which each of us has acquired and adopted, but certainly not always consciously.

However, the fault lines between Jewish and German identity are deeply buried and difficult to reach such that we can't get through to them forcibly. When dealing with this taboo, one can't simply charge forward to the core of the subject. In that case, one can only circle the taboo zone. I believe we managed to do that.

**We Germans**

I hope the mechanisms of remembering and forgetting, of defense and denial, often revealed, are universal. I also believe, that the concept of family is a kind of universal: a climbing tree in which each and every one of us immediately finds a place and climbs his own branch. In this sense, our film's narrative is a family story that certainly provides many facets for identification and projection.

It is a story about we Germans in the here and now. For me it isn't about allocating roles of victim and perpetrator. We aren't making any demands; we aren't accusing anyone. In that respect our family story has a conciliatory finish. We also had the impression that the long process of filming had a healing effect-at least within our family. Even so, the positions themselves are debatable and conflicting. I endeavored to retain these conflicts, and have them endure-not to iron them out, comment on them, or simplify them.

**Independent Production**

We financed three years of the work from our film *Weizenbaum. Rebel at Work*, a film on tour for many years. The sale of tens of thousands of DVDs supported us while we continued our research and film making.

Since 2001, we've worked independently as a two-person team. We've filmed in seven countries and travelled more than 100,000 kilometers. During the research we were unrestrained with our time and resources. Production of the film as an experiment was not open to discussion. Presenting the project to funding bodies was out of the question. Naturally, we can only hope that the audience recognizes the value in that independence.

Due to family constraints there is no DVD or BlueRay available, nor will there be a TV broadcast or online stream.

Peter Haas,

Silvia Holzinger,

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