

AN ANGEL IN HELL: ARTUR BRAUNER AND THE ATTEMPT TO MAKE A GERMAN OSKAR- SCHINDLER-BIOPIC

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Abstract

Film Studies tends to deal only with film projects that have been completed and pays particular attention to the work of directors, thus largely ignoring the fact that the vast majority of attempts to make movies fail, and marginalising the crucial role played by scriptwriters and producers in the initiation and development of film projects. To counter this tendency, this essay examines the unsuccessful attempt, between the 1970s and the early 1990s, of Artur Brauner, one of the leading producers in postwar (West) Germany, to make a biopic about Oskar Schindler. Like the Jewish workers rescued by Schindler, Brauner is a Jewish Holocaust survivor from Poland whose career as a producer has combined mainstream entertainment movies with films about the Third Reich and especially about the Holocaust. The essay explores the full range of his activities as a producer on the Schindler biopic – ranging from script development and financing to negotiations with actors and directors; highlights their transnational dimensions (through the involvement of personnel and co-production partners from France, the UK, Israel, the US, Poland, and the Soviet Union); and explores the refusal of (West) German funding bodies to support this project.

Keywords: Artur Brauner, Oskar Schindler, unrealised film projects, producers, film funding.

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Cehennemde Bir Melek: Artur Brauner ve Bir Alman Oskar-Schindler-Biyografik-Film'i Yaratma Girişimi

Öz

Film Çalışmaları yalnızca tamamlanmış film projeleri ile ilgilenme eğiliminde olup yönetmenlerin işlerine özel önem atfeder, bu yüzden film yapma denemelerinin büyük çoğunluğunun başarısız olduğu gerçeğini göz ardı ederek film projelerinin gerçekleştirilmesinde senaryo yazarları ve yapımcıların merkezi rolünü marjinalize eder. Bu makale, bu eğilime karşı koymak için savaş sonrası (Batı) Almanya'nın önde gelen yapımcılarından Artur Brauner'in başarısız olan, 1970'ler ve 1990'ların başı arasındaki Oskar Schindler hakkında bir biyografik film yapma girişimini incelemektedir. Yapımcı olarak kariyeri anaakım eğlence filmleri ile 3. Reich ve özellikle Holokost ile ilgili filmlerin birleşiminden oluşan Brauner, tıpkı Schindler tarafından kurtarılan Yahudi işçiler gibi Polonya'da Holokosttan sağ kurtulan bir Yahudidir. Bu çalışma, onun Schindler biyografik filminin yapımcısı olarak -senaryo geliştirme ve finansmandan yönetmen ve oyuncularla pazarlıklara kadar- eylemlerinin tamamını inceler, uluslararası boyutunu (Fransa, Birleşik Krallık, İsrail, Birleşik Devletler, Polonya ve Sovyetler Birliği'nden eleman ve ortak yapımcıların dahil oluşları üzerinden) aydınlatır ve (Batı) Alman fonlama kuruluşlarının bu projeyi desteklemeyi reddedişini araştırır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Artur Brauner, Oskar Schindler, gerçekleşmemiş film projeleri, yapımcılar, film fonlama.

Out of the countless film scripts being written, very few are seriously considered for production, and only a fraction of the film projects that do move beyond script development into pre-production are ever realised. In fact, scriptwriters and other film personnel probably invest much more time and creativity in the projects that never result in actual films than they invest in the films that get made, and the film industry spends a substantial portion of its overall expenditure on unrealised projects. As an academic discipline, Film Studies has not paid sufficient attention to this reality, concentrating as it does on the small proportion of film projects that are seen through to completion, and largely ignoring the creative and economic activity involved in unsuccessful attempts to get movies made. Among other things, this means that existing accounts of film history are woefully incomplete, because they have little, if anything, to say about the development of projects that fail to get realised and the reasons for their failure.¹ This state of affairs has contributed to the strong emphasis on the work of directors which is so characteristic of Film Studies; paying more attention to unrealised projects forces scholars to give more serious consideration to the crucial role of scriptwriters and producers.²

As a small contribution to a more comprehensive and less director-centred account of film history, in this essay I present a case study of an unrealised project by Artur Brauner, one of (West) Germany's leading film producers since World War II, who, long before Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), had started work on an Oskar Schindler biopic. My discussion of Brauner's unsuccessful efforts, between the 1970s and the early 1990s, to make this film mainly draws on a wide range of primary sources from the Artur Brauner Archive in the German Film Institute in Frankfurt-am-Main and an interview with Brauner.

¹ For exceptions to this rule, see, for example, recent academic work on Stanley Kubrick's unrealised projects: Krämer (2017a and b), Ulivieri (2017) and Fenwick (2018). Also see James Fenwick and Kieran Foster's call for papers for an edited collection entitled "Shadow Cinema: The Historical and Production Contexts for Unmade Films", <http://www.baas.ac.uk/project/cfp-shadow-cinema-the-historical-and-production-context-of-unmade-films-8-december/>, last accessed on 6 March 2018.

² Both scriptwriters and producers have received more attention from film scholars in recent years; see, for example, Horton and Hoxter (2014) and the work of the Screenwriting Research Network (<https://screenwritingresearch.com/>) as well as Spicer, McKeenna and Meir (2014) and Fenwick (2018).

The essay's primary aim is to outline the enormous variety and complexity of Brauner's engagement with the Schindler project, his involvement in script development, his search for personnel (often negotiating simultaneously with several candidates for the same job) and for money, his dealings with often rather unreliable, even actively hostile business partners and funding bodies. I trace the divergent responses, ranging from celebration to devastating criticism, from enthusiastic support to outright rejection, of various institutions and individuals to the proposed Schindler film, and discuss Brauner's passionate belief in the importance of the story he wanted to tell as well as his dogged determination to pursue the project's realisation, even after he had found out that he was in direct competition with a major Hollywood production.

A secondary aim of this essay is to outline both the transnational dimensions of Brauner's work on his Schindler project and his dependence on specifically German funding sources. From the outset, Brauner planned to shoot the film at least partly in Poland, where most of the story takes place, and to work with an East German director. At the same time, he tried to secure financing for the project in West Germany, with applications for subsidies from the Filmförderungsanstalt (FFA, the German Federal Film Board) in Berlin and the Bundesministerium des Innern (BMI, the Federal Ministry of the Interior), and negotiations with the independent production and distribution company Filmverlag der Autoren. After these attempts failed in 1983/84, Brauner expanded his search for investors and co-producers to other countries (Great Britain, Israel, France and the United States). He also considered working with foreign directors, especially from the Soviet Union and Poland. From June 1992 to March 1993 Brauner worked with the Polish scriptwriter and director Janusz Kijowski, and applied once again to the FFA and the BMI while also trying to get the German public service broadcasters ZDF and ARD on board. In addition, he negotiated with Polish partners and made a deal with a Moscow based film company. The film was now meant to be shot mainly in Russia, with some work also to be done in Poland. Thus, across its prolonged history, Brauner's Schindler project became increasingly "Eastern". Yet, its realisation continued to depend on public financing in Germany, which was not forthcoming.

Before examining these developments in detail, I want to briefly introduce Brauner in his own words and outline his background and career, both of which help us to understand why he was so strongly committed to making a film about Oskar Schindler.

Artur Brauner

In October 2014, Brauner, then 96 years old, dictated answers to a few questions I had sent him about his attempt to make a Schindler biopic. He said he had been interested in Schindler because he belonged to the very few people in Germany,

who acted not with, but against the Nazis. ... And this fact was of particular interest to me, because I knew that Schindler was not an aristocrat or an activist ..., but a simple German citizen - with feeling and decency (personal communication, received by email on 2 October 2014; my translation from the original German).

Brauner reported that he had visited, and talked at length with, Schindler in Frankfurt at the beginning of the seventies: "I realised that if there had been more Schindlers, the cruel actions of the Nazis would not have been possible". With reference to several films about the Nazi era that Brauner had made, in addition to dozens of often hugely successful genre movies, throughout his long career, he was able to convince Schindler "that I was the right man to make a film about him". Of course, Brauner would also have appeared to be eminently suitable for this job because he himself is, like the Jewish workers Schindler had protected, a Jewish Holocaust survivor from Poland.

After Schindler's death in 1974, Brauner and the scriptwriter Paul Hengge developed Schindler's story into a screenplay with the title "Ein Engel in der Hölle" ("An Angel in Hell"). When, in 1984, Brauner's funding application was rejected by the FFA, he was "devastated and very sad". Nevertheless, he continued working on this project, "parallel to other projects dealing with the Shoah". Indeed, from 1980 onwards Brauner's films had focused primarily on the Holocaust and the Nazi era, and their aftermath. These films included *Charlotte* (1980), *Nach Mitternacht* (After Midnight, 1981), *Die weiße Rose* (*The White Rose*, 1982), *Die Spaziergängerin von Sans Souci* (*The Passerby*, 1982), *Eine Liebe in Deutschland* (A Love in Germany, 1983), *Zu Freiwild verdammt* (After Your Decrees, 1984), *Bittere Ernte* (Angry Harvest, 1985), *Hanussen* (1988), *Hitlerjunge Salomon* (*Europa Europa*, 1990), *Der Rosengarten* (*The Rose Garden*, 1990), *Der Daunenträger* (Warsaw: Year 5703, 1992) and *Der Gehetzte* (The Hunted, 1993).³ As we will

³ Most of Brauner's films were international co-productions, filmed in a variety of languages. I have only given the German release title and, where available, the English-language release title. If no English title was available, I have translated the German title (these translations are not italicised).

see later, Brauner constantly referenced these films during his work on the Schindler project, and planned to employ people he had previously worked with on these films.

In response to my questions, Brauner stated that, initially, he had had no knowledge of American attempts in the 1950s and 1960s to turn Schindler's life into a movie (cp. Krämer, 2013), nor of Universal's plans (cp. Krämer, 2009) to adapt Thomas Keneally's non-fiction novel *Schindler's Ark*, which had won the prestigious Booker prize upon its publication in the UK in 1982, and in the United States had been published with the title *Schindler's List*. However, eventually Brauner found out about Universal's project, among other things through a letter from the studio's lawyers. The purpose of this letter was, according to Brauner, "to convince us that we should stop our production". Brauner explained that he was offered financial compensation, which he rejected.

Work on his Schindler project continued until 1993, when he finally stopped it a few weeks after his second funding application to the FFA had been turned down. Of course, 1993 is also the year when Universal's *Schindler's List* was released in the United States and became a huge success both with critics and at the box office around the world. Brauner commented:

I am glad that Spielberg produced and directed the film, because we would never have been able to make the film with the size and volume that Spielberg was able to achieve, and therefore our success would have been correspondingly smaller.

While, in 2014, Brauner thus acknowledged the power and impact of Spielberg's movie, he also insisted that "our film would have been made with more heart and feeling". How, then, did Brauner come to care so passionately about Schindler's story?

Born on 1 August 1918 in the Polish city Lodz, Brauner grew up in an affluent and relatively assimilated Jewish family (Dillmann-Kühn, 1990, p. 8). At the age of 19, he visited the Middle East with a group of young Zionists, and he later became an ardent supporter of the state of Israel, where his parents and all but one of his four siblings came to live after the war (pp. 9-10). Following the German attack on Poland in 1939, Brauner as well as his siblings and parents managed to evade capture by the Nazis, but many relatives died in the Holocaust (p. 10). Brauner

moved to Berlin in 1946, where he invested money in the first ever German film production on the territory occupied by the Western allies (the comedy *Sag die Wahrheit* [Tell the Truth]), and also set up his own company Central Cinema Comp.-Film GmbH (known as CCC) to produce a wide range of films, from the outset balancing what he perceived to be purely commercial ventures with projects about topics close to his heart (pp. 20-23). Thus, the first CCC production, the comedy *Herzking* (King of Hearts, 1947), was followed by *Morituri* (1948), a film about concentration camp inmates who manage to escape (pp. 23-38).

Brauner was very much a hands-on producer, getting involved in all aspects of film production, from story development and financing through to post-production and marketing (Dillmann-Kühn, 1990, pp. 14-15). His output was immense. By the early 1950s, he was producing three films a year; in the second half of the 1950s and the early 1960s it was well over ten; only in the mid-1970s did his output return to the lower level of the late 1940s and early 1950s; and from the mid-1980s onwards he produced on average only one film per year, and then, in the 1990s and the 2000s about one film every two years (pp. 240-89). By and large his films were in line with the popular genres of the day. What is more, for almost a decade, his productions regularly featured in the top ten of the annual box office charts for West Germany: the adventure films *Das indische Grabmal* (*The Indian Tomb*) and *Der Tiger von Eschnapur* (*Tiger of Bengal*) were at number five and nine, respectively, for the 1958/59 season; the military comedy *Der brave Soldat Schwejk* (*The Good Soldier Schweik*) was at number three and the musical *O sole mio* at number six in 1960/61; the drama *Via Mala* at number two and the musical *Adieu, Lebewohl, Goodbye* at number nine in 1961/62; the Westerns *Old Shatterhand* and *Der Schut* at number three in 1963/64 and at number eight in 1964/65, respectively; finally, the epic *Die Nibelungen 1. Teil: Siegfried von Xanten* (*Whom the Gods Wish to Destroy/Siegfried*) was the ninth biggest hit of 1966/67 (see the annual charts in Garncarz, 1994, pp. 124-8).

Brauner internationalised his operations from the mid-1950s onwards by working, on some of his films, with émigré filmmakers who were returning to (West) Germany (notably Fritz Lang); doing co-productions with foreign companies; employing foreign filmmakers and actors; shooting films abroad and in foreign languages; and even setting up a short-lived CCC subsidiary in London (Bergfelder, 2005, pp. 108-35; Dillmann-Kühn, 1990, pp. 104-33). At the same time, his productions re-

peatedly returned to the Nazi era and its aftermath, for example with the resistance drama *Der 20. Juli* (*The Plot to Assassinate Hitler*, 1955). Most of Brauner's films about the Third Reich dealt, like *Morituri*, with its victims: "The films that he calls his 'Jewish' productions do not ask about the causes of fascism, nor about the perpetrators, instead they focus on the victims. These often are children, juveniles" (Dillmann-Kühn, 1990, p. 164; my translation). These films included *Mensch und Bestie* (*Man and Beast*, 1963), *Zeugin aus der Hölle* (*Witness out of Hell*, 1967), *Der Garten der Finzi Contini* (*The Garden of the Finzi Cortinis*, 1970) and *Sie sind frei, Dr. Korczak* (*The Martyr*, 1975).

The latter, which dealt with a Jewish educator who, despite receiving offers to get out of the Warsaw ghetto, decided to stay with the many orphans he had been taking care of and to accompany them to the gas chambers, was in his own judgment next to *Morituri* Brauner's most important production, honoring both a heroic figure and the child victims of the Holocaust (Dillmann-Kühn, 1990, p. 164). Preparations for, and production of, this film (which was shot in the summer of 1973) overlapped with Brauner's initial contact with Oskar Schindler. And subsequent work on his Schindler biopic ran parallel to a dramatic overall shift in his output, away from the comedies, sex films and horror movies so prominent in the 1970s to a primary focus on his "Jewish" films, starting with *Charlotte* (1980).

Brauner's Schindler Project 1983/4

In October 1983, Brauner's company CCC issued a press release about its forthcoming production *Ein Engel in der Hölle* "about the life and deeds of Oskar Schindler who saved the lives of 1,200 people in Poland during the war" (CCC, 20 October 1983; my translation). The film would be based on a script by Paul Hengge, and it would star Günter Lamprecht. No director was mentioned, but it was announced that the project was to be filmed in Germany, Poland and Israel. This reference to Israel was the only, very indirect, hint at the fact that the people Schindler had rescued were Jews.

On 30 January 1984, CCC submitted an application to the FFA for this project. In its rejection letter on 19 April, the FFA referred to problems with the budget, and in particular with the script: "the sadism of the SS is exploited dangerously to create exhibitionistic effects. The dialogue is shockingly superficial and sexualised. The book is superficially written

and ... almost unacceptable speculation, whereby authenticity is just a pretext" (Bähr, 1984; my translation). Brauner's application for subsidies from the BMI was equally unsuccessful that spring (Hahne, 1984).

Brauner, whose FFA application for *Bittere Ernte* had also been rejected the previous year (cp. Brauner, 18 April 1983), accused the funding body of being biased against "themes to do with the Nazi era insofar as they are dealt with in an uncomfortable fashion" (Brauner, 3 May 1984; my translation). He insisted on the authenticity of Hengge's script and found fault with the FFA committee's limited imagination because it was unable to accept "that the SS and Gestapo engaged in the most gruesome and extravagant sadism". He went further by stating: "only the victims, or almost-victims, can assess developments during the Nazi era correctly". He mentioned a woman he had personally known, who, after months of abuse by an SS officer, "was murdered during the sex act in a forest". Brauner revealed that, for him, "the past, the most dreadful of yesterdays, becomes ever more present". And he concluded: "If only one of the people who meet and decide in the commission had experienced this cataclysm in his family or close by - he would judge and decide more humanely". In this letter Brauner described Oskar Schindler as "the most noble German of the last century", but he never mentioned the fact that the people Schindler had rescued were Jews.

The FFA responded on 11 July 1984, declaring Brauner's reference to personal experiences as irrelevant for its decision. The letter also stated "that FFA subsidies are not meant to help the Germans deal with their past" (Backheuer & Caspary, 1984; my translation). Projects about the Nazi era could only be subsidised if they were financially viable and of a high quality. The letter argued that, in rejecting Brauner's application, the FFA did not deny historical facts, nor did it fail to appreciate the suffering of the victims of the Nazi regime, quite on the contrary:

It is solely due to the fact that [the Commission] feels obliged, particularly in the interests of the victims of this time, not to allow the historical facts to be exploited in the way that the script you have presented suggests.

Thus, the FFA seemed to say that it acted on behalf of the victims, more so than Brauner did. Once again, the Jewishness of the victims under discussion here was not mentioned. Instead the FFA referred very generally to "those directly concerned who include more people than just

you". This could be understood as an attempt to deny the special status of Jewish victims of the Nazi regime to whom Brauner belonged.

In March and April 1984, Brauner also corresponded with the Filmverlag der Autoren. Two years earlier, the distributor had released the Brauner production *Die weiße Rose*. Now Brauner tried to interest it in *Bittere Ernte* and *Ein Engel in der Hölle*. With reference to the latter, he mentioned Frank Beyer as director, who had been nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film for *Jakob der Lügner* (*Jacob the Liar*, 1974). Brauner wrote: "it is well known that Beyer is the most successful and most highly regarded director of the GDR [German Democratic Republic]" (Brauner, 24 March 1984; my translation). Hansjörg Kopp, of the Filmverlag, expressed great interest in the Schindler film, but also pointed out what he considered to be the script's weaknesses. In particular, he felt that Lagerkommandant Gruber (the equivalent of Amon Göth) was "a rather broad caricature of a ridiculous sadist", which, in his view, undermined the film's credibility (Kopp, 9 April 1984; my translation).

While this was similar to the FFA's objection, Kopp also noted that overall the Nazis were portrayed "correct and just". Furthermore, he felt that the script's emphasis on Schindler's love life was not only legitimate but also appealing. He had strong concerns about the script's framing story in which "the Jews, including those who were saved by Oskar Schindler, thank him, thank this particular German". This was, in his view, not only overly sentimental, but also very dangerous. Perhaps he felt that it was simply inappropriate to include a scene in which Jews pay tribute to their German rescuer in a film made in the country of the perpetrators. Brauner's response showed his willingness to reconsider Gruber's characterisation, although he also pointed out that Liliana Cavani had had worldwide success with the sado-masochistic *The Night Porter* (1974), "especially through drastic scenes which have in fact taken place in the camps" (Brauner, 17 April 1984; my translation). Nothing came of all this, and six months later Kopp (26 October 1984) finally told Brauner that he was no longer interested in the Schindler project. By this time, Frank Beyer had dropped out as well, and Brauner had started looking for investors and co-producers outside Germany.

Brauner's Schindler Project 1984-90

In the summer of 1984, Brauner had sent a translation of Hengge's script, entitled "An Angel in the [sic] Hell (The Schindler Story)" to the London based film producer Mark Forstater (cp. Brauner, 2 October 1984). Forstater (1984) responded in October: "whilst the characterisation shows considerable depth and insight this genre of film does not fall into my future production plans". Forstater (n.d.) later changed his mind, but by that time he was concerned about the legal implications of Universal's plan to adapt Thomas Keneally's novel, which had been announced already in November 1982 (cp. Krämer, 2009, p. 23). Brauner (29 January 1985) told him that "the book of Keneally has nothing to do with our screenplay". Instead, he explained, the script was informed, among other sources, by a German television documentary (*Die Juden nennen ihn "Vater Courage"* [The Jews Call Him "Father Courage"] broadcast on the third programme of the Südwestfunk in December 1975). Brauner also noted that Schindler's wife, who was still alive, did not appear in the script, so that there would be no legal problems with her. He mentioned a contract with a Polish company that would allow him to start production on the Schindler project in three or four months. The company's name is not given here, and perhaps Brauner was exaggerating how far he had gotten with his negotiations.

In any case, in March and July 1985, CCC (8 July 1985) signed a contract with the Israeli company Fimanor Financial Management, regarding "production financing and exploitation" of *Ein Engel in der Hölle*. The contract gives the film's budget as DM 5 million, two thirds of which would come from CCC and one third from Fimanor. The film was to be shot in Berlin and in Poland. The contract stipulated that a large number of fundamental issues –to do, for example, with the script, the cast and crew, and the film's distribution– needed to be resolved by October 1985, and it would seem that such resolution was not achieved, because Fimanor was no longer mentioned in Brauner's later correspondence about the film.

Instead, in 1986 CCC was corresponding with the French company Fortuna Films about the Schindler project (Brauner, F., 1986). Now, Klaus Maria Brandauer was named as the lead, and Frank Beyer was back as director. Once again, nothing came of this. Two years later, Brauner (26 April 1986) had discussions with the Soviet director Tengis Abu-

ladze, who started revising Hengge's script. A meeting between Abuladze and Brandauer, who in the meantime had played the lead in the Brauner production *Hanuszen*, was planned, but it does not appear to have taken place, because Aduladze did not make sufficient progress with his revisions and, indeed, never fully committed to the project in the first place (Brauner, 18 August 1988).

Brauner did, however, sign an agreement about the Schindler project with the Israeli producer Menahem Golan in May 1988 (Schiff, 17 April 1989; Schiff, 26 June 1989). According to this agreement Golan was to invest \$1 million before the start of principal photography and another million "on delivery" of the completed film (Schiff, 12 October 1989). Brauner had previously worked with Golan in the 1960s and 1970s, and had also brought him on as co-producer on *Der Rosengarten* (a film made in 1989). With his business partner Yoram Globus, in 1979 Golan had taken over the American production company Cannon Pictures, and in the 1980s he had become one of the leading independent producers in the US, his output ranging from cheap "exploitation" movies to expensive blockbusters as well as art house films. However, Cannon ran into financial difficulties and was taken over by the Italian company Pathe Communications in 1989 (Prince, 2000, pp. 73, 150-1).

From April that year, Brauner used a law firm in Beverly Hills to negotiate with Cannon/Pathe's new management about the Schindler agreement (Schiff, 17 April 1989). His American lawyer, Gunther Schiff, was excited about the project, for which several new directors were now considered (including Agnieszka Holland, who had directed *Bittere Ernte*, Fons Rademaker, the director of *Der Rosengarten*, and even Brandauer). Schiff (19 June 1989) wrote: "I think it is a powerful story of one man's heroism, and ability to stand up for some decency in a world gone mad with lust and killing". After he had received a second draft of Hengge's script⁴ Schiff (15 August 1989) explained:

it is certainly a fine story of a human heroism in adversity. Since most people do not know the outcome, there is plenty of tension as Schindler works his way through the Nazi hierarchy protecting his Jewish workers [,] and the audience will not necessarily know that he was successful until the end of the picture.

⁴ Unlike the first draft, this second draft, somewhat misleadingly labelled "Urversion", can be found in the Artur Brauner Archive (Hengge, n.d.).

By this time, it was clear that Pathe had no intention to stick to the agreement with CCC. Schiff (11 July 1989) had earlier told Brauner: "no one in the new management is interested in doing the picture". He suggested that it might be necessary to sue Pathe. But he also mentioned the possibility of merging Brauner's project with Universal's Keneally adaptation. Pathe, trying to get out of its contract with CCC, used the existence of Universal's Schindler project to question Brauner's right to make his own Schindler movie (Schiff, 15 August 1989). Schiff (18 August 1989) countered:

no basic literary rights were acquired as the character "Schindler" is historical in nature and is in the public domain. ... [I]t is not intended to utilize the characters of any living person, if there be any, unless we obtain a written release beforehand.

Schiff (18 September 1989) also argued that it was entirely possible to release two films about Schindler: "*Schindler's List* is based on a novel, and ... must, perforce, be something different than the docudrama represented in the script which I have sent you".

Here, he ignored the fact that Keneally's non-fiction book was based on very extensive research and stayed much closer to Schindler's actual biography than Hengge's script. Indeed, the Universal project could draw both on Keneally's book and on research carried out for a planned MGM biopic about Schindler in the 1960s, the rights to which Universal also had purchased (cp. Frohne, 15 February 1993; Krämer, 2013, p. 138). Schiff was vaguely aware of the long history of Hollywood's attempts to turn Schindler's life into a movie. Towards the end of 1989, pursuing once again his idea of a merger of the two projects, he tried to convince Pathe that Frank Davis, the former "head of Business Affairs at MGM", "may be able, because of his contract with *Schindler's List*, to suggest some combination which may be acceptable to all concerned" (Schiff, 21 November 1989; Schiff, 15 December 1989).

In the second half of 1989, then, Schiff pursued three different and indeed conflicting strategies vis-a-vis Pathe: he argued that there was enough room in the market place for two Schindler films; he suggested a merger of the two projects; and he threatened Pathe with legal action. During this time, he was, however, extremely skeptical about his chances of success. Hence he was not fooled by Pathe's sudden agreement "to go forward with the production and distribution of this picture" (Schiff, 13

November 1989). Since Pathe insisted that principal photography had to start before the end of the year, which would be extremely difficult to organise, Schiff thought it was a trap: "I don't believe that Pathe is really very interested and I believe they are only waiting for a technical default on our side." Indeed, Schiff (15 December 1989) told Pathe that Brauner would only be able "to gather the elements to commence principal photography of the film in September of 1990". Soon afterwards, the agreement between Pathe and CCC must have been dissolved; it is unclear whether there was any financial settlement.

In any case, at the beginning of the next year, CCC told Schiff to send the Schindler script to none other than Menahem Golan: "Mr. Golan is interested in a co-production for this film" (Gerngroß, 1990). At the same time, Brauner (5 January 1990) discussed the project once again with Brandauer, but a few months later, he noted that Jan Niklas, who had played one of the leads in *Der Rosengarten*, had agreed to play Schindler: "Niklas made me a promise under the condition that we start shooting the film in February or March 1991" (Brauner, 28 May 1990; my translation). Now Brauner was once again looking for a director in Eastern Europe (specifically in the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary), and also considered a revision of Hengge's second draft script by Georg Marischka, who had written scripts for Brauner in the 1960s and had also acted in two of his 1980s productions (among them *Der Rosengarten*). Marischka said he needed some clarification before he could begin work on this revision: "What is historical fact in the script, what has been invented (by whomever) [?]" (Bommarius, n.d.; my translation). He also insisted on talking to witnesses, especially to so-called Schindler Jews, that is Jews who had been rescued by Schindler. This would seem to suggest that Marischka had doubts about the veracity of Hengge's script, similar perhaps to the doubts the FFA had expressed in 1984. In any case, there is no evidence that he actually started work on the project, which seems to have been put on ice for a while.

Brauner's Schindler Project 1992/3, Part I

In the summer of 1992, two years after the last flurry of activity on Brauner's Schindler project, the producer returned to it with renewed energy, now firmly committed to a fundamental revision of the script and more strongly convinced than ever before that he needed to work with Eastern Europeans on this film. In June 1992, Janusz Kijowski signed a con-

tract with CCC in which he agreed to write a screenplay entitled *Schindler* "based on an idea by Art Bernd and Paul Hengge", Art Bernd being a pseudonym Brauner used (CCC, 22 June 1992; my translation). At the same time, Brauner (9 June 1992) was discussing the possibility of bringing Russian directors on board, among them Dimitriy Astrakhan.

This was followed by three months of hectic activity because Brauner wanted to submit another application to the FFA at the end of September. By the beginning of that month, he had found a new co-producer in Studio Janr in Moscow (Brauner, 4 September 1992). He wrote that principal photography would have to start by March 1993, so as to be able to film the winter scenes, and also to complete the film before Spielberg completed Universal's *Schindler* project. He noted that the Russian director Vladimir Motyl had confirmed his involvement in the project (Brauner, n.d. [September 1992]).

By this time, Kijowski had completed the first draft of his script, on which he had worked closely with Brauner (cp. Brauner, 15 September 1992). Brauner (23 September 1992) wrote, for example: "I shortened the erotic love scenes between Gruber and Miriam". He also now wanted Kijowski to take over as director (Brauner, 25 September 1992, "Notiz"). This appears to have been for financial reasons: Motyl's services were cheap, but hiring Kijowski increased Brauner's chances to get production financing from Poland. However, at this point Kijowski was only willing to work on the script.

Also in September 1992, Brauner was once again thinking about the cast. By coincidence, he had met Bruno Ganz on a plane and learnt that he was being considered for the lead in *Schindler's List*. Brauner wanted him for his own project, in case Spielberg did not pick him:

I told him that we've been preparing the film for over 10 years, that I knew *Schindler* and that I really wanted to produce the film, because for me *Schindler* was, like Dr. Korczak, one of the most beautiful characters of the last century (Brauner, 14 September 1992; my translation).

But two weeks later Brauner got once again in touch with Brandauer, ensuring him "that we want to make this film", and that the leading role was his: "he was shocked! He thought that now that Spielberg decided to make his *Schindler* film we would not proceed" (Brauner, 25

September 1992, "Gedächtnisnotiz"; my translation). At the same time, Brauner also talked to Jan Niklas and Günter Lamprecht about the part.

In preparing his application to the FFA, Brauner put together various materials,⁵ among them a plan for financing the production. The film's budget now was DM 3.85 million (more than one million less than the 1985 budget). This was to be put together with subsidies from the FFA, BMI and Eurimages (DM 1.4 million), FFA "Referenzmittel" (subsidies paid for the follow-up to a successful release) for *Hitlerjunge Salomon* (DM 0.5 million), pre-sales of theatrical, video and television rights (DM 1 million) and CCC's own money (DM 0.95 million).

While the FFA application is not in the archive, I was able to get hold of a plot summary which was submitted as part of it. Schindler is introduced as "one of the greatest humanists of the Third Reich"; [a] bon vivant, who moved in the highest circles of the SS":

He succeeded in saving the lives of 1,200 Jews who were employed in his armaments factory. ... For many years, no one suspected that Oskar Schindler's aim was to use all means at his disposal to bring his labour force, which consisted almost exclusively of Jewish prisoners, through the war and to prevent deportation to a concentration camp ("Inhaltsangabe Projekt: Schindler", 1992; my translation).

The summary noted that he achieved this mainly through bribery. Half of the text concerns Schindler's relationship with women: "To reach his goal, all means are right for him. He mainly uses beautiful, high-ranking women to entice SS officers, and in most cases begins a relationship with them in order to obtain information". Three women are singled out because they come to dominate Schindler's life: Maria, "his Polish secretary and mistress"; Hannelore, "a high-ranking secretary of the Reich's Main News Centre"; and "the pretty Jewish girl" Myriam.

According to this summary, the story revolves centrally around Schindler's dealings with these three women, in particular the ambiguously portrayed Hannelore. On the one hand, "Hannelore succeeds in saving Schindler's life with a fictitious message from the Reich's headquarters in Berlin and liberating his Jewish detainees who had been deported to Auschwitz." On the other hand, she does not accept any competition for Schindler's affection and forces him to leave Maria. She also destroys

⁵ These are contained in folder ABA_NSA2008.1_145, ABA.

Myriam. The summary ends with the sentence: "Myriam, who Hannelore sees as serious competition, is the only one left behind at Auschwitz".

The FFA application was submitted on 30 September 1992 (FFA, 1992). Two months later CCC wrote to the FFA: "it has been communicated to us verbally that our application has been rejected" (CCC, 4 December 1992; my translation). The letter expresses great disappointment, "as we had judged this project to have a good chance for worldwide success". The official rejection letter came in January 1993:

The Commission unanimously rejects the application. It believes that the most serious reservations have now been dispelled, but that the material remains speculative. Although stories like this one may have happened, it is presented like emotionally charged sensationalism. For these reasons, too, the Commission does not see any chance for commercial success in movie theatres (FFA, 1993; my translation).

The phrase "may have happened" suggests that the FFA did not only continue to question the veracity of the script but also had doubts about the existence of any (non-Jewish) German rescuers of Jews. In addition, the reference to the lack of commercial potential remains extremely vague; the letter does not even refer to the competition with the Spielberg film.

In October 1992, CCC had also submitted an application for production subsidies for *Schindler* to the BMI. It lists Brandauer, Niklas and Ganz as candidates for the main role and mentions that important parts would also be given to Polish actors. Kijowski is named as director, although at this point he had not yet signed any contract to such effect. In an appendix Brauner mentioned that the project had previously been submitted to the BMI in 1984, but with a different script and "without the high-calibre cast and without a director who was awarded the prize for best director at the film festival [in Karlovy Vary] in 1990" (CCC, 26 October 1992; my translation). The one-sentence plot summary states: "The film deals with the life of Oskar Schindler, who, in 1944, by risking his own life saved 1,200 Jews from certain death".

The application was submitted to the federal archive in Koblenz (Bundesarchiv Koblenz) on 26 October 1992, together with a letter that Brauner had sent to the BMI three days earlier. In this letter Brauner emphasised the great significance of Schindler's deeds, and thus also of his Schindler film. Brauner described Schindler as a unique person

who must be called the "best, most humane German of the last century". For he has, unselfishly and at the risk of being deprived of his own freedom, spent his entire fortune of about 2,500,000 gold marks on the economic office of the SS and other Nazi organisations to save the lives of "his" 1,200 Jewish workers (Brauner, 23 October 1992; my translation).

Brauner noted that Schindler achieved "what no-one else living under the Nazi regime was able to do. He saved several hundred women in the Auschwitz camp from being killed and several hundred men from the concentration camp Groß-Rosen". Brauner mentioned that Schindler had received many honours in Israel and other countries, and that "he is honoured and celebrated by the people he saved as a kind of demi-god". The letter ended with a call for action: "A monument must be built for this wonderful man, and we hope with confidence that our film - with your support - will succeed in doing so". However, on 25 January 1993 CCC received a rejection letter, which did not provide any explanation at all (BMI, 1993).

Brauner's Schindler Project 1992/3. Part II

In between the submission of the applications to the FFA and the BMI in September and October 1992, and the receipt of rejection letters in January 1993, Brauner continued to work on the Schindler project. From October onwards he corresponded with the Warsaw based company M. M. Potocka Productions Ltd. about the possibility of receiving Polish production subsidies, which would make it necessary to shoot part of the film in Poland.⁶ In January 1993, he was told that the chances for Polish subsidies were good. Although there was also great interest in Spielberg's project, "I and many people think that Kijowski is one of our best directors and he needs Polish support for any of his projects" (Potocka, 1993). Kijowski himself had already contacted the Polish minister of culture who had promised financial support for the Schindler film (Kijowski, 1992). On 15 October he had also signed another contract (which was dated 22 June 1992) with CCC about the revision of his script: "The author undertakes to act on the ideas, suggestions and comments of Mr. Artur Brauner and to process his wishes accordingly" (CCC, 22 June 1992; my translation; also see CCC, 15 October 1992). And on 6 November 1992 he finally signed on as the film's director (Studio Janr, 1992).

⁶ This correspondence can be found in the lever arch file ABA_NSA2008.1_144, ABA.

Before Kijowski did this, Brauner had continued with his search for directors. In October, he wrote to Rolf Schübel to tell him about “the wonderful character of Schindler and the internationality of the theme” (Brauner, 9 October 1992; my translation). Two weeks later Schübel responded that he was moved by the story of the real Oskar Schindler, but did not like the script because it was too conventional and lacked surprises: “the whole thing reminds me fatally of German made-for-television movies from the 80s” (Schübel, 1992; my translation). This is pretty much the opposite of the FFA’s criticisms. In any case, Schübel did not want to film this script, and although he might have been interested in thoroughly revising the screenplay himself, there were clashes with other projects which prevented him from committing to the Schindler film.

Paul Hengge’s response to Kijowski’s script was similarly negative, but for different reasons. CCC had contacted him at the beginning of October 1992 to ask whether he was happy with the writing credit they planned to use: “by Janusz Kijowski and Art Bernd, derived from a manuscript by Paul Hengge based on actual events” (Büttner, 2 October 1992; my translation). While Hengge agreed to this, he also noted that “the manuscript ... contains considerable errors and is very clumsy. I am skeptical that you will succeed with this version” (Hengge, 14 October 1992; my translation). He also thought it would be better to reinstate the part of the framing story in which Jews and Christians get together to bury Schindler on a Catholic cemetery in Jerusalem: “this might have a lot to say to people today and perhaps give them some insight” (Hengge, 1 December 1992). This suggestion was not taken up by Brauner and Kijowski.

In addition to his correspondence with Kijowski and Hengge, Brauner continued with his search for the right man to play Schindler. After he had sent Brandauer Kijowski’s script at the beginning of October 1992, the actor replied:

I think it is wonderful that you pursue this project so persistently and purposefully, although you know that Steven Spielberg wants to film the same subject in the near future. But you’re quite right, why not approach this extraordinary subject from two different angles? (Brandauer, 1992; my translation).

There is a note of skepticism here, but Brauner continued to discuss the project with Brandauer, and sent him Kijowski’s latest script draft at the end of November; he also planned to set up a meeting be-

tween Kijowski and Brandauer (Brauner, 1 December 1992). In addition, he corresponded with Bruno Ganz's agent in October 1992 and with Jan Niklas's agent in January 1993.⁷ He assured the latter that Niklas could not find a better role than that of Schindler: "if he plays Schindler, he can once again hope for a Golden Globe or an Oscar" (CCC, 4 January 1993; my translation).

From October 1992 to February 1993, Brauner also worked closely with Kijowski on several script versions. The Artur Brauner Archive contains a French translation, dated 3 November 1992, of Kijowski's second version, originally written in Polish; the French title is *Un Ange en Enfer / histoire de Oskar Schindler* (Hengge & Kijowski, 1992). Then there is a German translation, dated February 1993, of Kijowski's third version, entitled *Schindler Ein Engel in der Hölle / Die Geschichte von Oskar Schindler* (1993). Kijowski's had started work on this version already in November (Brauner, 26 November 1992). Interestingly, Brauner had ordered a video recording of the British TV documentary *Schindler* from 1983 "which [Kijowski] urgently needs to get to know in some detail the background, the buildings, the people etc. for the revision of the new script version" (Brauner, n.d. [October 1992]; my translation). Finally, the archive contains Kijowski's fourth script version, dated 18 February 1993, in the original Polish (Kijowski and Bernd, 1993).

One of the primary concerns for Kijowski's revisions was the length of the script. In October 1992, Studio Janr, which appears to have been a co-production partner with significant input into the shaping of the project, had expressed its concern about what it judged to be the excessive length of Kijowski's first script version, in response to which Brauner (8 October 1992) assured Studio Janr that the film would not be longer than 100 minutes. A few weeks later, Brauner calculated that Kijowski's second version would be forty minutes too long, and deleted several scenes; he noted: "I told Kijowski about my cuts, which add up to about 20 minutes, and he agreed with them in principle" (Brauner, 27 November 1992; my translation). The cuts only concerned the first half of the script, and Brauner's correspondence with Kijowski's made it clear that he expected him to cut a similar amount from the second half (Brauner, 26 November 1992). Indeed, Kijowski's final version was 107 pages long, which, assum-

⁷ The correspondence with Ganz's agent can be found in the lever arch file ABA_NSA2008.1_144, ABA.

ing the industry standard of one minute of film per page of script, came very close to the target length of 100 minutes.⁸

Although Brauner, as we have seen, had already heard about the FFA's rejection of his funding application in December 1992, which also must have led him to expect a rejection from the BMI (cp. Brauner, 9 May 1994), at the beginning of the new year he continued to be deeply engaged in his Schindler project, declaring in a letter that "so far no distributor has been willing to take on the film in exchange for a guarantee. We want to finance the entire film on the basis of bank loans" (CCC, 4 January 1993; my translation). He also mentioned that CCC had already spent over DM 650,000 on the project. On the same day he told the Berliner Filmkredittreuhand GmbH that he wanted to replace a project for which he had already been given funding by the bank with *Schindler – Ein Engel in der Hölle*; principal photography was to start on 1 March (Brauner, 4 January 1993).

At the end of January, he sent the Schindler script to the television drama department of the ZDF. He described the planned film as:

the story of Oskar Schindler, the most humane German of the last century, which can be said without exaggeration. Though he was not a priest, an ascetic or a saint, but a simple man, one with heart, feeling, also with a sense of joie de vivre, humour and danger (Brauner, 27 January 1993; my translation).

He linked this project to *Bittere Ernte*, *Der Rosengarten* and *Hitlerjunge Salomon* and declared that, like these earlier Brauner productions, the Schindler film "can be both an artistic and a commercial success". There is no further correspondence with the ZDF in the archive. But on 4 March 1993 CCC received a letter from the Degeto Film GmbH, an ARD subsidiary, in which the company, although not willing to buy the television rights for the planned Schindler film at this point, nevertheless expressed interest in viewing the completed film "if the television rights would then still be available" (Königstorfer, 1993; my translation).

Parallel to his efforts to find money in Germany, Brauner also seems to have speculated once again on the possible involvement of Hollywood companies. Although there is no correspondence with American production companies, in February 1993 Brauner tried to cast an Ameri-

⁸ By contrast, Hengge's first script draft had had 117 pages and his second 152 pages.

can in the role of Schindler (which would certainly have helped with getting American companies interested in the project). He contacted Chad Everett, who was very interested in the Schindler role, but demanded \$20,000 per week, which was too much for Brauner (Nobe, 1993). Brauner also wrote to the agent of Dirk Benedict: "the film will be an important humanistic and artistic production" (Brauner, 17 February 1993). In response to the agent's salary demand, the producer wrote: "we cannot pay \$15[,]000 per week for this film, which is a human obligation for us, and not a profit product" (Brauner to Gross, 18 February 1993). A few days later, he was still hopeful that he could bring down Benedict's price, because he included him on a list of candidates for the Schindler role, together with Brandauer and Heinz Hoenig (cp. CCC, 16 February 1993), whereas he noted that Ganz had turned down his offer in the meantime, as had Hanns Zischler, who had previously appeared in *Der Rosengarten* and *Hitlerjunge Salomon* (CCC, 24 February 1993).

While Brauner thus turned to Hollywood once more, Hollywood also started to pay attention to him again, but not the kind of attention he would have wanted. On 15 February 1993, a lawyer representing the London branch of Universal Pictures wrote to him:

[Universal] holds the exclusive film rights to Thomas Keneally's book. It also holds the exclusive rights to the life story of Oskar and Emilie Schindler. Likewise, our client has acquired the exclusive rights to use the name, character and image of the persons mentioned in the annex who are connected with Schindler's life (Frohne, 15 February, 1993; my translation).

The attached list included about forty names, among them Itzhak Stern and Leopold Page/Pfefferberg. The letter demanded that Brauner stop his production because it was suspected that it violated the rights Universal had purchased.

Brauner's response repeated several arguments he had already presented in his correspondence with Mark Forstater in 1985 and with Pathe in 1989:

Oskar Schindler is a person of contemporary history. The idea and design of a film about Oskar Schindler came into being long before Keneally's book was ever written. Mrs. Emilie Schindler does not appear in our script at all. ... Furthermore, no other living persons appear in the plot; instead characters are freely invented to serve

the dramatic composition (Brauner to Frohne, 18 February 1993; my translation).

Brauner also pointed out that there was “no real clash” between the two Schindler projects, “because our film has a maximum of 1/10 of the budget [of *Schindler’s List*] ... and is thus more intimate, purposeful and focused on the individual.”

In a letter dated 5 March, the Universal lawyer informed Brauner that in several US states (among them California) the personal rights of dead people had the same protection as those of the living, which would make it possible for Universal to prevent the distribution of Brauner’s film in these states (Frohne, 5 March 1993). It seems that at this point Brauner was getting ready to give up the fight. On 11 March, he told the Universal lawyer that principal photography on the Schindler film was about to commence: “apart from four barracks, all the sets have been built in Russia” (Brauner, 11 March 1993; my translation). He estimated that he had spent about DM 1 million on the project up to this point (which is DM 350,000 more than in January; this must have been the money spent on sets and other preparations during the preceding weeks) (Brauner, 1 April 1993). The subsequent correspondence between Brauner and the Universal lawyer⁹ addressed the issue of possible financial compensation which Brauner mentioned in response to my questions in October 2014. As already noted in the introduction to this essay, according to Brauner, there was no such compensation.

Indeed, already on 9 March he had written to Studio Janr to cancel the Schindler project:

we are very sorry to ask you to stop the preparation of the movie *Schindler*. Because we didn’t have the calculation we didn’t get insurance, and without insurance we didn’t get a credit of a bank and so we were not able to engage actors (Brauner, 9 March 1993).

Furthermore, Brandauer, who appears to have been Brauner’s favourite for the Schindler part, was not available after all (probably due to scheduling clashes; see Brauner, undated [1993]) and Kijowski refused to go on without him (cp. Brauner, 13 February 1993). What is more, Brauner noted, the director appeared to be depressed, and “frightend [sic] to fail in comparison to Spielberg” (Brauner, 9 March 1993).

⁹ This correspondence can be found in the lever arch file ABA_NSA2008.1_145, ABA.

Even in this utterly hopeless situation, Brauner continued to come up with admittedly rather desperate, indeed fantastic plans. Perhaps it would be possible to complete the film "for less than 300,000 DM", that is a small fraction of the earlier budgets; he might be able to raise this amount, and suggested 1 April as the start of principal photography. Studio Janr's response was deeply contradictory. Of course it was "impossible" to finish the film with so little money, but with drastic cuts in the script it might yet be "possible" after all (Litvinov, 1993). In fact, however, Brauner's two-decade long effort to make a film about Oskar Schindler was finally over.

Aftermath

In a letter to the FFA dated 9 May 1994, Brauner explained that the real reason for the failure of his Schindler project was "[the] Award Commission's refusal to provide funding for the film at the end of 1992/the beginning of 1993": "Because, with this refusal, CCC film which was actually completely convinced that it would receive funding had been financially driven into a corner that made it practically impossible to realise the project" (Brauner, 9 May 1994; my translation). As a consequence of the FFA's rejection, Brauner noted, his application to the BMI also had had little chance of success because "the BMI usually coordinates its decisions with you".

Brauner's letter was a response to an open letter the FFA had sent to the Deutsche Presseagentur; with this letter, the FFA had in turn reacted to statements Brauner had made a few weeks earlier in conjunction with the release of *Schindler's List* in Germany on 3 March 1994. Two weeks before that release, the Zurich newspaper *Weltwoche* had published a long article entitled "Warum Schindlers Geschichte kein deutscher Film wurde" ("Why Schindler's Story Did Not Become a German Movie"). It told the story of Artur Brauner's attempt to get a Schindler biopic made. It also provided background information on the producer, characterising him as an "Eastern European Jew who was lucky to escape from a concentration camp" (Knorr, 1994; my translation).

When Brauner had first heard about Oskar Schindler, he, so the article, was astonished that Schindler was not better known, not publicly honoured and supported: "How is it possible, a dumbfounded Artur Brauner asked himself, that such a man is actually hushed up by the Ger-

mans?" (Knorr, 1994; my translation). After his own negative experiences with the FFA, Brauner was more convinced than ever that the reason for this neglect, even suppression, was the fact that Schindler's deeds had uncomfortable implications for everyone who had failed to intervene in Nazi atrocities. He suspected:

that there were and still are forces in the federal government that wanted to downplay his deeds in order not to have to confirm the proof that a German could be humane in those barbaric times. Such evidence would destroy the general image that death was imminent if orders were not carried out, and that was to be prevented (Knorr, 1994; my translation).

While the author of this piece supported Brauner's line of argument, he also cited a member of the FFA who argued: "If we Germans film this kind of story, it will look as if we want to hide behind Schindler and whitewash our past". The article also pointed out that precisely this argument had been used against Brauner in an inflammatory article in a Polish magazine, which claimed that "he only wanted to make the Schindler film to downplay Germany's guilt with this 'good German'".

Later articles in German newspapers indicated that there was widespread concern about what foreign responses to a German Schindler film would have been.¹⁰ The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* wrote on 4 March 1994: "Would it really have been possible to show a German production, which, of millions of stories, told precisely the one about a German who saves Jews, in other countries?" ("Made in Germany?"; my translation). The day before, the newspaper had quoted several German filmmakers on this topic, among them Joseph Vilsmaier: "If a German had shown a good German like Schindler, it would have been, especially with this topic, a bit too much for the press" ("Das wär' unverschämt", 1994). And Herbert Achternbusch stated bluntly: "This could only be done by someone like Spielberg, because he is a Jew" ("Das wär' unverschämt", 1994).

Of course, Brauner is Jewish as well, and he has always seen himself very much as an international producer, rather than a narrowly German one. More fundamentally, it has to be noted that he kept his distance from "the Germans", as Dillmann-Kühn noted in 1990: "to this day he refers to the Germans as 'the Germans'" (Dillmann-Kühn, 1990, p. 11;

¹⁰ For a critical analysis of the discussion about Schindler's List in Germany, see Niven (1995).

my translation). In the end, then, Artur Brauner, a Jewish Holocaust survivor from Poland, was unable to make his film about Oskar Schindler, a rescuer of Polish Jews, because from the outset core funding for this project was to come from German funding bodies. These doubted the commercial viability of the project, judged the script to be in bad taste (to do especially with its emphasis on sexual relations) and seemed to have difficulties accepting that Schindler's rescue of over 1,200 Jews had really happened. They also appear to have believed that Schindler's story should not be told in a German production, subsidised by the German state, because it might be understood abroad as an attempt to "white-wash" the German past – although Brauner, a Jewish Holocaust survivor from Poland who did by no means identify with "the Germans", had made it very clear that his film was meant as an indictment, not only of the perpetrators of the Holocaust but also of all those Germans who passively stood by and let it happen.

It is also important to emphasise that, whatever the strengths and weakness of the scripts that Brauner submitted in his funding applications may have been, the FFA's highly critical evaluation of Brauner's Schindler project was not shared by the vast majority of people (actors, directors, financiers etc.) he dealt with, both in Germany and abroad, in his attempt to get the film made. Indeed, support for the project seemed to be strongest outside Germany, and it is perhaps no coincidence that on two occasions (with Fimanor in 1985 and Menahem Golan's Cannon in 1988/89) Brauner came close to realising his film with *Israeli* partners.

Conclusion

There is a substantial academic literature about Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (see, for example, Loshitzky, 1997). Yet this literature rarely comments on the fact that from the 1950s onwards there had been several unsuccessful attempts, first in the United States and then in Germany, to make a biopic about Oskar Schindler. These attempts are as much part of film history as *Schindler's List*, and therefore deserve, even require, the attention of film historians (for a detailed account of these earlier attempts see Krämer, 2013). The unrealised Schindler biopics are not at all exceptional but quite typical for the ways in which the film industry and its writers and producers operate. On any imaginable topic, there have been many unrealised projects for each film that got made. Interestingly, cinephiles have long shown a strong interest in such unrealised

projects, which is serviced by publications (e.g. Castle, 2009, and Hughes, 2008) that are addressed to a general readership rather than primarily to academics. It is high time for the debate among film academics to do some catching up so that they can begin to offer a more comprehensive account of film history.

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Abbreviations:

ABA = Artur-Brauner-Archiv (Artur Brauner Archive), Deutsches Filminstitut (German Film Institute), Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

BMI = Bundesministerium des Innern (Federal Ministry of the Interior)

CCC = Central Cinema Comp.-Film GmbH, later CCC-Filmkunst

FFA = Filmförderungsanstalt (German Federal Film Board)

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