“ROMMEL, YOU MAGNIFICENT BASTARD”: THE DESERT FOX AND THE REHABILITATION OF GERMANY IN POSTWAR MEDIA

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Matthew Edward McGinn
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The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the
Thesis of Matthew Edward McGinn:

“Rommel, You Magnificent Bastard”: The Desert Fox and the Rehabilitation of
Germany in Postwar Media

Edward Beasley, Chair
Department of History

Lawrence Baron
Department of History

Mary Wauchope
Department of European Studies

5/21/13
Approval Date
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family. Without your love and support, this thesis would not have been possible. I still remember that day in middle school, when my brother piqued my interest in a certain wily German officer.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Matthew Edward McGinn

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This paper examines the effect of film and television in shaping the image of Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. The Desert Fox has been primarily examined from a military perspective, but this thesis shows that Rommel’s reputation as a battlefield tactician and resistance leader helped shape other areas of society. The United States and Great Britain used Rommel’s image as an archetypal ‘Good German’ in order to rehabilitate West Germany as a client state during the Cold War. The methods used here include examining film and television programs from the United States and Great Britain, newspaper reviews, and relevant scholarly literature. Western filmmakers crafted two Rommel narratives. The resistance narrative was focused around the attempted assassination of Hitler and it showed that not all Germans blindly followed the Nazis. This depiction of Rommel gained acceptance slowly, because many people viewed it as whitewashing Nazi atrocities in order to force rehabilitation at the expense of capturing war criminals. After the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the resistance narrative became more accepted. The desert war narrative depicted the German military as an honorable institution that was a separate entity from criminal organizations, such as the S.S. The lack of atrocities in North Africa, the good treatment of POWS and the admiration held by both sides painted the conflict in nostalgic tones. In the 1970s, the desert war proved itself useful by highlighting American patriotism during the social and political quagmire of the Vietnam War. This attempted to unite the fractured American populace by showing them a time where the United States had been powerful and the enemy was more clearly defined.

Television’s ability to connect with viewers in their own homes helped it overtake motion pictures as a form of entertainment by the 1970s. Television writers used the desert narrative to exploit ratings, but viewers perceived it as an unrealistic representation of war due to its nostalgic tones. After the United States’ involvement in Vietnam, television companies used the resistance narrative coupled with Holocaust imagery in order to depict war as a traumatic event. This helped the United States overcome internal divisions and rehabilitate Germany in order to combat communism. By the late 1980s, the Soviet Union began its decline. The resistance narrative transferred the mantle of the ‘Good German’ to the ‘Good European’ in order to shape a post-Cold War world.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During World War II, the Allied Powers and the Axis forces clashed in the North African desert. The German commander, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, and his exploits mesmerized both his own men and the Western World. After the war, military historians and the soldiers themselves romanticized the desert war as reminiscent of the old style chivalrous combat between two armies. The United States government and Western filmmakers used Rommel’s reputation as a battlefield commander and his role as a resistance leader in order to portray him as an archetypal ‘Good German’ and allay fears against German rearmament. Through film and television, the Desert Fox helped promote reconciliation with West Germany and win the Cold War.

Rommel’s portrayal in film evolved over three stages. In the first stage, the American and British production industries became linked with governmental policies following the outbreak of WWII. These governmental policies, like Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Lend Lease Act of 1941, were aimed at strengthening the bond between the Allied Powers. These strictures influenced war films, which in turn served as propaganda by explaining why the Allies had to fight. The second stage shows how Erwin Rommel, and his role as a resistance leader, was used in the postwar era in order to show that the German military was an honorable organization unblemished by Nazi ideology. The final stage shows how filmmakers shifted their focus from the European Theater to the desert war, portraying it as an old style conflict with chivalrous values. This proved to be beneficial during the Vietnam War, where the desert war was exploited to bolster American patriotism. The Field Marshal has been primarily examined from a military perspective. Books and journal articles concerning the depiction of Germans in film and how WWII has been portrayed in popular memory will help fill in the gaps on how the ‘Good German’ archetype was constructed. Eight films, and their scripts, were specifically chosen on the criteria that either Rommel played a significant role to the overall plot of the film or he made a brief cameo. These films are all from American and British studios: *Five Graves to Cairo* (1943), *The Desert Fox: The
Story of Rommel (1951), The Desert Rats (1953), Foxhole in Cairo (1960), The Longest Day (1962), Hitler (1962), Patton (1970), and Raid on Rommel (1971). Foreign films may prove useful in understanding how Rommel’s image has been constructed in popular memory, but these movies are either out of print or rarely air on television and their scripts are not readily available for study. Foreign films are also shown from a different perspective than the Allied filmmakers. The monograph The Films of James Mason (1977) by Clive Hirschhorn and selected articles from the historical Los Angeles Times and the New York Times will uncover how the general public perceived these films.

The second half of the paper covers the evolution of Rommel’s image on television. Similar to the Rommel films, the television industries of the United States and Great Britain became linked with governmental policies that affirmed Cold War aims. These governments courted potential client states and disavowed communism as a harmful ideology. The television companies used these themes by applying them to early television programs, which adhered to government regulations through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The desert war narrative was exploited for ratings, but the post-Vietnam era showed that it was an unrealistic portrayal of war. The resistance narrative supplanted the desert war by adhering to audience expectations about war through the use of Holocaust imagery. In the latter half of the 1980s and early 1990s, the Holocaust imagery of the resistance narrative helped shape the post-Cold War world by transferring the characteristics of the ‘Good German’ to all Europeans. This would help bind countries of the former Soviet Union closer to the Western World, as long as they adhered to American ideals. Books and articles dealing with the history of television are used to discern how the miniseries and television movie format were chosen as vehicles to portray the Desert Fox. Monographs and journal articles about the Holocaust’s portrayal in television provide evidence that the resistance narrative became tied with Holocaust imagery.

The same conditions set for the Rommel motion pictures apply to the miniseries and television movie formats. Rommel must either appear as a cameo or play a central role to the plot. The miniseries and television movie’s selected for this study are also from American and British production companies: The Winds of War (1983), The Key to Rebecca (1985), War and Remembrance (1988), The Plot to Kill Hitler (1990) and The Night of the Fox (1990). The Winds of War seems to violate the rules since Rommel does not appear in the
series, but the characters and narratives begun in *The Winds of War* are concluded in *War and Remembrance* where Rommel is important to the plot. The scripts for *The Key to Rebecca* and *The Night of the Fox* could not be located, but consultation with archivists explains their disappearance. Television scripts are harder to find than movie scripts, because they are not kept unless they win awards. These scripts may have been kept by people involved with the production of the programs in their private papers, but this makes them inaccessible to the public. Television documentaries are ignored for the scope of this project, because the quantity of programs would in itself require its own study.

Erwin Johannes Eugen Rommel was born to Erwin Rommel, Sr., and Helene von Luz on November 15, 1891, in Heidenheim, Germany. Growing up, Rommel wanted to become an aeronautical engineer. He even successfully built a glider three years after the Wright brothers completed their famous flight in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Eventually, the youth changed his mind and decided to pursue a military career. His father was reticent about Rommel’s choice, but Erwin Rommel, Sr., supported his son by helping him enlist in the local 124th Württemberg Infantry Regiment, before sending him to study at the officer cadet school in Danzig. During World War I, Rommel fought in France, Romania, and Italy where he received numerous honors, such as the Iron Cross first and second class, as well as the *Pour le Merite*, Germany’s highest honor. While on leave, Rommel married Lucia Maria Mollin in 1916; the couple had a son named Manfred in 1928.

After WWI, the Treaty of Versailles enacted harsh reparations against the Germans, and Germany was forced to reduce its military. Rommel was chosen by General von Seeckt as one of the one hundred thousand remaining members of the German Army as a part of the officer corps due to his leadership abilities and battlefield record. He served garrison duty at

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3 Ibid., 29.
4 Lewin, 2.
5 Mitcham, 33.
6 Lewin, 8.
Stuttgart before being transferred to the Dresden and Potsdam military academies. At Potsdam, Rommel published his WWI memoirs, *Infanterie greift an*, or ‘Infantry Attacks’ (1937). This textbook differed from other works by adhering to a narrative structure that drew from Rommel’s own battlefield experiences, which encouraged students to think outside of perceived military standards. This made Rommel a popular teacher and it brought him to the attention of Germany’s new leader, Adolf Hitler. Rommel led the *Führer’s* security forces at the Nuremberg rally, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. Later, Rommel took charge of the 7th *Panzer* division and served with distinction in France.

During WWII, Rommel became an internationally known figure. Rommel was put in charge of the *deutsche Afrika Korps* and sent to reinforce the Italians in North Africa. Rommel’s daring battlefield reversals earned him the moniker the Desert Fox from his Allied counterparts. The North Africa campaign also served as part of a larger strategy to support the war with Russia. The North Africa campaign was contingent upon the success of the invasion of the Soviet Union. Russia and Germany had signed a pact of nonaggression in 1939, but Hitler broke the pact in order to secure *lebensraum*, or ‘living space,’ for the German people. However, the Nazis soon became embroiled in a two front war between Russia and England. The Eastern European Theatre was perceived as being closer to Germany and, as a result, North Africa was seen as a frontier by the German people. This made Russia a larger priority than North Africa and military resources were allocated there. Rommel began to question Hitler’s judgment when supplies and reinforcements were diverted to the Russian front at the expense of the desert war. If Rommel had succeeded, his troops could have cut the British Empire in half by taking the Suez Canal. Rommel would

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7 Mitcham, 37.
8 Ibid., 38.
9 Ibid., 41.
10 Ibid., 44.
11 Ibid., 25.
13 Ibid., 264.
14 Lewin, 207.
then have proceeded to link up with the German forces in Russia, smashing the Soviet Union. Rommel believed that Hitler was leading Germany to its inevitable destruction and wanted to pursue peace in order to save the Fatherland. With the Axis defeat in North Africa, Rommel was transferred to the Atlantic Seawall in 1944. Rommel’s orders were to oversee the construction of defensive fortifications. Though not present at Normandy during the D-Day invasion, Rommel personally oversaw the fighting near Caen in July 1944.

During this time, members of an anti-Hitler conspiracy approached Rommel in order to get his support. Before Rommel could give any assistance, his staff car was strafed by an Allied fighter plane. During Rommel’s hospitalization, the conspirators detonated a bomb at Hitler’s headquarters near Rastenberg on July 20, 1944. The conspirators also initiated Operation Valkyrie. This was a contingency plan that used the reserve army to arrest members of the Schutzstaffel, or ‘the S.S.,’ in case of an uprising. This coup d’état would have dismantled the Nazi government, but Hitler survived the attempt with minimal lacerations and ordered a retributive purge. After Rommel’s connection to the conspiracy became uncovered by the Gestapo, or ‘the Nazi secret police,’ Generals Burgdorf and Maisel met the Field Marshal at his home in Herrlingen, Germany, and charged him with treason. Rommel’s choices were to stand trial, risk the loss of his pension, and damage his reputation, or he could quietly commit suicide and be buried with full military honors. After saying farewell to his wife and son, Rommel bit down on a cyanide capsule and died on October 14, 1944.

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15 Ibid., 210.
17 Lewin, 236.
18 Ibid., 237.
CHAPTER 2

THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH FILM INDUSTRIES

The Cold War relationship between the American and British governments with filmmakers had its origins in WWII. Robert Sklar in his monograph *Movie-made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (1975) and Lewis Jacobs in his article “World War II and the American Film” (1967) argue that the U.S. film industry did not become linked with governmental policies until the United States entered WWII. According to Jacobs, most American films served as an escapist form of entertainment prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. However, increasing concern over the rising threat of fascism allowed the motion picture industry to become “totally engaged in the obligations and demands of a government at war.” After WWI, the United States embraced a policy of isolationism and neutrality. When WWII began, the U.S. maintained its neutrality in what it considered a European conflict. However, the aggressive actions of the Third Reich and Imperial Japan generated concern in portions of American society and they sought to help the beleaguered countries. When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt actively supported the British through his Lend Lease Act (1941) and suggested that America rearm, filmmakers began to include inspirational scenes of defensive preparations and British activities. These appealed emotionally to the American film going audience. The shocking attack on Pearl Harbor dispelled any remaining isolationist notions.

The U.S. government censored images it deemed detrimental to the American military. According to Jacobs, filmmakers acquiesced to the government’s strictures and they took it a step further by forming their own War Activities Committee. This committee linked

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20 Ibid., 1.

21 Ibid., 3.

22 Ibid., 10.
all facets of the film industry, from producers to union representatives, in order “to establish mutual cooperation in the national interest.” The War Activities Committee persuaded filmmakers to show battle sequences and home front images in order to explain why Americans fought. The committee also examined the experiences of U.S. Allies to help garner sympathy for them. These pictures served as propaganda pieces by focusing “on the political aspects of fascism in addition to its barbarism, and to dramatize the craving and need of human beings resisting [Nazi domination] for freedom.”

The devastation of WWII allowed American filmmakers to gain control of the film market. Prior to the war, European countries had achieved prominence in the film industry through innovative new technologies, such as the use of sound. American studios realized that foreigners would prefer to listen to movies in their native languages, so they created their own foreign language departments. The Great Depression bankrupted studio foreign language departments and this allowed the Europeans to remain in control of the film market. WWII allowed American studios to distribute films to the government as training aids and they released films in advance of their screen dates to the military.

The motion pictures released during WWII portrayed Germans in a distinctly negative light. Sabine Hake argues in her monograph Screen Nazis: Cinema, History, and Democracy (2012) that there were four stereotypes used by filmmakers to depict Germans: the party member, the officer, the sympathizer, and the collaborator. The party member is usually an agent of the Gestapo or S.S., and belongs to the lower class. This shows that Nazi society is hierarchical in nature and prides itself on its institutionalized violence in order for people to advance. This also shows that the Nazis perverted the natural social hierarchy by putting lower class thugs in positions of authority. Hake states that the officer stereotype

23 Ibid., 10.
24 Ibid., 16.
26 Ibid., 223.
27 Ibid., 252.
appears only in leading roles. The officer is characterized by his aristocratic background and is painted as a tragic figure, “torn between honor and duty […] with his internal conflicts hidden by his emotional reserve and sense of social propriety.” The sympathizer and collaborator stereotypes exemplify the corruptive nature of Nazism. The sympathizer and collaborator use the Nazi hierarchy to improve their own social condition.

The film *Five Graves to Cairo* (1943) shows that the German stereotypes were used very effectively by filmmakers in order to promote war aims. *Five Graves to Cairo* was the only Allied film during WWII that portrayed Rommel as a character. The Paramount Pictures release was directed by Billy Wilder, a Jewish refugee from Nazism. The movie was loosely based on a play by Lajos Biro and the script was written by Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder. The movie’s fictional plot is centered on Corporal John Bramble, played by Franchot Tone, and his experiences at the German occupied Empress of Britain Hotel in North Africa. Tone’s Bramble, dehydrated and delirious, stumbles into the hotel after his entire unit was destroyed by Rommel’s forces. The narrator states that “the victorious Rommel and his Africa Korps were pounding the British back and back toward Cairo and the Suez Canal” making the Allies’ position precarious. The owner, a Muslim named Farid, and a French maid take him in and hide him when Rommel himself sets up his headquarters at the hotel.

Rommel, played by Erich von Stroheim, exemplifies the officer stereotype. Stroheim was a German character actor notable for playing Germanic villains as far back as 1918, where in the film *Heart of Humanity* he played “a bestial Hun who [threw] a baby out a window.” The Desert Fox is always shown in his military regalia. Even when he is in bed, Rommel is shown using his Field Marshal’s baton to swat flies. Rommel speaks in both

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29 Ibid., 42.
30 Ibid., 42.
31 *Five Graves to Cairo*, directed by Billy Wilder (1943; Paramount Pictures, Inc., 2012), DVD.
32 Five Graves to Cairo Release Dialogue Script, April 30, 1943, Special Collections, Beverly Hills, AMPAS, 2, Reel 1A.
33 *Five Graves to Cairo*, directed by Billy Wilder (1943; Paramount Pictures, Inc., 2012), DVD.
fluent German and accented English, highlighting his otherness as an enemy. Stroheim’s Rommel is shown to be honorable, having good relations with British prisoners of war. He even invites the British officer corps to a banquet and gives them lessons on battlefield strategy. A British officer named McOwen turns to Rommel in a close shot, saying “Field Marshal, twice we chased you towards Tripoli; past Tobruk, Derna, Bengasi. Twice you turned us back at El Aghelia […] How?” Stroheim’s Rommel smiles, stating that the British forces did not chase him and that he led their forces on until the Allied Powers’ “supply lines stretched out like a rubber band. Then-(hits table)-I cut it.”

The fictional Rommel’s intelligence makes him overconfident, which leads to his downfall. The Empress of Britain Hotel’s waiter, a man named Davos, was killed in an Axis airstrike. Bramble assumes the waiter’s identity, but it is revealed that Davos was a Nazi collaborator. Davos used the hotel laundry to relay information to the Luftwaffe, or ‘the German Air force.’ Bramble muses that “a towel could be a dash, a washcloth a dot. Why don’t you see, a sheet could mean ten thousand men,…and a towel, petrol tanks coming through.” Rommel does not know Davos personally, so Bramble is free to move behind enemy lines and gather intelligence. Tone’s Bramble uncovers that Rommel visited Egypt disguised as an archaeologist named Professor Cronstaetter. The 1937 archaeology expedition acted as a cover for the German military to bury fuel and ammo to help pave the way for the eventual Axis invasion. These dumps are the titular Five Graves, and if they are reached, it would allow Rommel to move without worrying about maintaining his supply lines. The locations of the Five Graves are cleverly designated on the map by the letters in the word Egypt.

Though Stroheim’s Rommel is depicted as an honorable soldier, he surrounds himself with unsavory people. The Field Marshal’s aide de camp, Lieutenant Schwegler, is described by Rommel as a good German soldier. Schwegler was “decorated in Poland for conspicuous
gallantry in action. At twenty-one, he was commanding a tank company.”41 However, Schwegler abuses his authority to serve his own needs. The French maid, Mouche (played by Anne Baxter), has a brother in the French resistance. He was captured and sent to a concentration camp. Mouche appealed to Rommel to get him released, but he urged her to go through the proper channels, such as through the Red Cross.42 Schwegler intercepts Mouche after her meeting and says he has contacts in Berlin who could release her brother. He will only contact them if she exchanges sexual favors.43 The Nazi system may have helped Schwegler advance to a prominent position in German society, but he is remorseless regarding his actions. Schwegler begins to be suspicious of Bramble, but his affair prevents him from relaying the information to the Field Marshal. This paints the Nazi system in a negative light by showing that its followers are corrupt and the few good soldiers, like Rommel, once they become enmeshed in its hierarchical structure are prevented from doing their jobs.

*Five Graves to Cairo* affirms the Allied Powers’ moral superiority. Schwegler finds Davos’ body and Bramble kills him. Baxter’s Mouche is distraught and plans on turning him in to protect her brother, but Bramble argues that the war is bigger than her, affecting “a million brothers.”44 She strides towards Rommel, but Mouche’s steps become hesitant until she eventually turns to go back. Stroheim’s Rommel calls for Mouche, and he tells her that he found forged letters of release for her brother. Mouche, realizing that she was lied to, says she killed Schwegler in order to let Bramble escape and tell the Allies about the Five Graves. Bramble escapes, telling Farid to show the Germans evidence that will exonerate Mouche after he is safely out of their reach. The Allies exploit Bramble’s intelligence and beat back the Axis forces. Tone’s Bramble returns triumphantly to the Empress of Britain Hotel, eagerly searching for Mouche. Farid solemnly informs the Corporal that although they found her innocent of shooting Schwegler, the military tribunal found her guilty of spreading enemy rumors. Farid tells Bramble that “they led her out. (sniffles) one bullet would have

41 Ibid., 9, Reel 5A, Scene 58.
42 Ibid., 4, Reel 3A, Scene 25.
43 Ibid., 6, Reel 3A, Scene 42.
44 Ibid., 6, Reel 5A, Scene 33.
been enough.” Bramble goes to her grave and pledges that he will continue to fight and then rushes off to join the tank column.

Five Graves to Cairo shows that the events of the war not only attracted people to the movie theaters, it helped enforce ideological values. Edwin Schallert of the Los Angeles Times wrote that every studio was working to release war movies about Africa. Five Graves to Cairo was released in “one hundred or more first-run theaters [in order to coincide with] the climax of the events on the South shores of the Mediterranean.” This showed that the Allies were gaining ground, and that the war was drawing to a close. Erich von Stroheim’s portrayal of Erwin Rommel gave it a documentary quality that helped give it legitimacy as a war film. The realistic depiction of Rommel and the war helped make the film resonate with the home front audience. The tragic ending may have left a bad taste in the audience’s mouth, but it helped show the oppressive nature of Nazism. This made it imperative that the war end as quickly as possible in order to save lives and ensure that the occupied territories gained their freedom.

Films produced during WWII were overwhelmingly used for propaganda purposes, but the postwar industry had to situate itself within a Cold War context. Ideology had been put on the backburner among the Allied Powers during WWII, but the threat of nuclear war caused them to mistrust each other. From an American and British perspective, communism became equated with fascism because of its one party system and its absolute power over all aspects of people’s lives. People viewed communism suspiciously due to its atheistic doctrine and its rejection of free market economics, making it anti-Western. The use of nuclear weapons by the Americans during WWII sparked an arms race, which made it impossible for each side to directly confront the other without fear of a thermonuclear reprisal. Instead, both sides courted potential allies to their cause as client states. West Germany’s proximity to the Soviet bloc gave it strategic importance, but the U.S.

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45 Ibid., 7, Reel 5B, Scene 49.


48 Ibid.
government had to reeducate Americans about their attitudes towards Germans. The Third Reich showed the Allies how a belligerent country could cause such devastation and that they needed to be lenient towards Germany, lest they create a similar situation to what spawned the Nazi Party. The U.S. government used Rommel’s image as a ‘Good German’ to help rehabilitate Germany.
CHAPTER 3

ROMMEL AS A RESISTANCE LEADER IN FILM

Twentieth-Century Fox’s *The Desert Fox: The Story of Rommel* (1951) was not only the first postwar film to portray Erwin Rommel as a character, but it also was the first film to show the German military in a positive light. The movie was directed by Henry Hathaway and the screenplay was written by Nunnally Johnson. Charles P. Mitchell’s *The Hitler Filmography: Worldwide Feature Film and Television Miniseries Portrayals, 1940 through 2000* (2002), Wolfram Wette’s *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality* (2006), and Douglas Peifer’s “Commemoration of Mutiny, Rebellion, and Resistance in Postwar Germany: Public Memory, History, and the Formation of “Memory Beacons’” (2001) argue that Germans were depicted during WWII solely as fanatical Nazis. According to Mitchell, this portrayal of the Germans stems from people’s fascination with how Hitler managed “to secure power and succeed, even if for only a short period of time, in causing unparalleled human suffering.”

Wette states that while the U.S. government pursued the denazification process, it fostered a negative perception of the *Wehrmacht*, or ‘the Unified Armed Forces of Germany,’ as embodying German militarism. He argues that during WWII, the *Wehrmacht* was aware of Nazi racial and extermination policies. Hitler’s government and the German military linked anti-Semitism to battlefield operations in the Eastern European Theatre. On June 22, 1941, the *Wehrmacht* received orders from the German high command “to crack down hard” and “completely eliminate all [Bolshevist] resistance, both active and passive.” The means of resistance were explicitly left vague to the reader so soldiers would “attack and “eliminate” everyone connected with Bolshevism and Judaism.” The Commissar Order drafted by Adolf Hitler stated that all members of the communist party were to be shot on sight. This

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51 Ibid., 94.
order was “formulated in such a way that officers must inevitably have read it as authorizing virtually all kinds of violence against civilians of the USSR.”52 The Wehrmacht soldiers in the Eastern European Theatre also worked closely with the Einsatzgruppen, which were S.S. death squads. General von Manstein, commander of the Eleventh Army, urged his troops to accommodate these death squads. He argued that “these measures are […] necessary to suppress uprisings, which in most cases are instigated by Jews.”53 There were some soldiers who voiced dissent with these racist policies, such as Lieutenant Colonel Hellmuth Groscurth. He was a member of the general staff that “attempted to intervene in the killings at Belaya Tserkov’.”54 However, soldiers who voiced their dissent were urged by the high command to stay out of Einsatzgruppen’s way or were relieved of their command. These soldiers were aware of the atrocities committed by the S.S. and acted as bystanders or participants.

This negative perception of the Wehrmacht began to change after the verdicts of the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunals and the rearmament policies of the West German government. The International Military Tribunal (IMT) was held between 1945 and 1946. In one IMT trial, the judges deemed the “leadership corps of the National Socialist Party, the Gestapo and Security Service (SD), the SS, the SA […] and the cabinet of the Reich” as criminal organizations.55 Members of these criminal organizations told prosecutors that they were just following orders when they had ordered the deaths of civilians or that they had had no knowledge of these inhuman acts. The German military high command was originally considered for indictment as a criminal organization, but the “tribunal ultimately determined that [it could not] be considered an “organization” or a “group” under the terms of Article 9 of its constitution.”56 Following these trials was the United States Nuremberg Military Tribunals (NMT). NMT 12, the “High Command Trial,” took place between 1947 and 1948. Fourteen members of the Wehrmacht high command were charged with crimes against peace

52 Ibid., 95.
53 Ibid., 96.
54 Ibid., 97.
55 Ibid., 210.
56 Ibid., 210.
and participating in war crimes. The high command officers were acquitted of crimes against peace, but eleven of the defendants were found guilty of war crimes. NMT 12’s verdict implied that the Wehrmacht had paid its price for having served the Nazi regime.

The West German government helped whitewash Wehrmacht involvement in Nazi atrocities by embracing a resistance narrative. Peifer states in his article that the West German chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, pushed forward a plan to rearm Germany and join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Adenauer’s plan would help integrate WWII veterans into the newly formed Bundeswehr, or ‘Federal Defense Force,’ and bind Germany closer to the West. The West Germans achieved the rehabilitation of the military by harnessing a narrative of resistance. The primary example the Adenauer Government used was the July twentieth plot to kill Hitler. The Chancellor even put people connected to the anti-Hitler conspiracy, such as General Hans Speidel (Rommel’s Chief of Staff), in key cabinet positions. During the war, Germans considered the conspirators as traitors, but Peifer argues that the plot offered a glimmer of an honorable past that otherwise “threatened to overwhelm them with guilt and shame.” The West German cinema produced several films regarding Operation Valkyrie, such as It Happened on July20th, also known as Jackboot Mutiny (1955), and The Plot to Assassinate Hitler (1955).

The film industry helped reeducate the American and British populace by relying on the concept of the ‘Good German.’ The ‘Good German’ archetype did not participate in Nazi atrocities and resisted the Third Reich’s tyrannical rule. Due to their good battlefield and human rights records, ‘Good Germans’ were shown to be pro-Western. The Desert Fox film crew took cues from the Adenauer Government by focusing on a resistance narrative in order

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57 Ibid., 213.
58 Ibid., 220.
60 Ibid., 1028.
62 Peifer, 1035.
63 Hake, 73.
to paint a sympathetic portrait of the Field Marshal. The film is a biographical picture that follows Rommel’s military career from 1942 to his death. The movie used a variety of methods to portray itself as an authentic historical document. Jeanine Basinger argues in her monograph *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (1986) that films became imbued with authority through the use of symbols. According to Basinger, symbols, such as dedications, the use of props, and even people helped situate a movie within a frame of reference. For example, *The Desert Fox* mentions in the opening credits that it is based on the monograph *Rommel, the Desert Fox* (1950) by British Brigadier General Desmond Young. Brigadier General Young even appears in the film as himself and a voice actor is dubbed over to serve as a narrator.

The film also gains authenticity by being shot in black and white. During the war, most films, including newsreels and propaganda, were shot in black and white. These movies were dark and gritty and they allowed the home front audience to experience the war. Since photographs and documentaries appeared in black and white film stock, this created the association in audience’s minds that it was a historical document. When soldiers returned home, the images on the screen corresponded with what they saw during the war. This struggle to assure the authenticity of the final product shows that filmmakers were interested in not only entertaining their audiences, but educating them as well.

In *The Desert Fox*, actor James Mason stars in the titular role and he portrays Rommel as rejecting the criminality of the Nazi regime. Mason’s Rommel first questions the legitimacy of the Third Reich when the German high command refuses to reinforce the *Afrika Korps*. In scene fifty-six, Rommel meets with General Bayerlin in order to discuss the supply situation. The Field Marshal does not blame Hitler personally, but he denounces “those swine” surrounding the *Führer* for manipulating the war for their own benefit. After

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64 Jeanine Basinger, 18.
65 Ibid., 73.
66 *The Desert Fox: The Story of Rommel*, directed by Henry Hathaway (1951; Twentieth-Century Fox, 2003), DVD.
67 Basinger, 197.
the Axis defeat at the Second Battle of El Alamein, Rommel rails against the high command; “Rommel (stubbornly): It’s that gang of harpies around him. Jodl, Keitel, Himmler, Bormann. Those pigs. They must have thirty divisions in France doing nothing […] and if we could have had but two more!” Dialogue such as this shows that Rommel and the rank-in-file of the Wehrmacht, at least to the film crew, perceived themselves as nothing more than professional soldiers and that they were being held back by the machinations of politicians. However, this does not garner sympathy for the Wehrmacht because had it succeeded, the Nazis would have won.

Mason’s Rommel becomes a sympathetic character because he realizes too late that Hitler was a madman, and loses his life as a result. The Field Marshal first rebels by disregarding Hitler’s order to fight to the last man. When Rommel goes back to Berlin for medical leave, he describes to his family and the Mayor of Stuttgart, Doctor Karl Strolin, that it was “impossible to have an argument with [Hitler, because] he raves, he screams.” This shows that Hitler is becoming increasingly delusional as the war progresses. Strolin, played by Cedric Hardwicke, later mentions the formation of the anti-Hitler conspiracy to the Field Marshal. While prominent men in the military and civilian government are involved, Mason’s Rommel still wants to convince Hitler to sue for peace with the Allies. Mason’s Rommel attempts to convince Hitler, portrayed by Luther Adler, to abdicate, but the Führer says that super weapons will turn the tide of the war in the Axis Powers’ favor. However, “as Hitler wrangles on […] Rommel’s eyes grow colder” showing he is fully committed to the dictator’s assassination. This portrayal of Hitler shows that the Nazi regime, while seductive to a military mind, is innately corrupt and must be fought against. When Rommel and other Germans pick up arms against it, they are showing their moral superiority and are transformed into ‘Good Germans.’

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69 Ibid., 28, Scene 73.
70 Ibid., 30, Scene 73.
71 Ibid., 36, Scene 80.
72 Ibid., 51, Scene 100.
73 Ibid., 74, Scene 136.
Rommel’s death in *The Desert Fox* is portrayed in a sympathetic manner. After the failed attempt to kill Hitler, Burgdorf and Maisel, along with a contingent of the S.S., surround the Field Marshal’s house. The Generals give Rommel the *Führer’s* ultimatum. Rommel decides that he will risk the public spectacle of the Nazi court in order to combat the treason charges. However, the Generals inform Mason’s Rommel that if he does not commit suicide, actions might be taken against his family and staff. It is at this point that Rommel chooses not to plead his case in court, making his death a noble sacrifice. Rommel tells his wife, played by Jessica Tandy, that he is going to die. Mason’s Rommel says he wants to tell his son Manfred about his impending death, but his wife argues that “I can tell him so much better…what kind of man his father was.” Rommel and his family are fully accepting of the Field Marshal’s death and the way he is ushered off screen makes it seem like a hagiography. Even though Mason’s Rommel is killed, his legacy of resistance shows the Allies that some Germans resisted Nazism. Their deaths provide a platform for the Allies to reach out to West Germany and rehabilitate its military branches.

Despite the film’s commercial success, *The Desert Fox*’s sympathetic portrayal of Rommel generated controversy. The U.S. State Department reported that it had “tried and failed to talk Hollywood out of producing the picture.” The State Department argued that *The Desert Fox* glorified “the career of a Nazi general” but Twentieth-Century Fox proceeded with the project anyway. The studio pursued this course of action because the writers could not find evidence of Rommel being complicit in Nazi atrocities and his reputation as a commander was internationally known. Twentieth-Century Fox later gained permission from the State Department to film *The Desert Fox* in Germany. The *Los Angeles Times* article “Desert Fox:” Germans fill Theatres for Rommel Movie” (1952)

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74 Ibid., 90, Scene 175.
75 Ibid., 94, Scene 182.
76 Ibid., 99, Scene 185.
77 “U.S. Opposed to Showing Rommel Film in Germany: State Department Asserts Motion Picture to Glorify Career of Nazi General,” *Los Angeles Times*, (1923-current file); November 16, 1951; proquest historical newspapers: *Los Angeles Times* (1881-1988), 16.
78 Ibid., 16.
79 Ibid., 16.
argues that although this gave the perception that the U.S. government tacitly approved the film, it still decided to delay *The Desert Fox*’s premiere in Germany for ten months.  

Some people considered *The Desert Fox* as misrepresenting the war. British and American critics of the film argued that *The Desert Fox* glorified “German militarism and created] a Rommel legend.”  

Jewish organizations feared that Mason’s favorable portrayal of Rommel helped “whitewash the Nazis” in order to foster reconciliation with Germany at the expense of pursuing war criminals.  

Thomas Brady states in his article “Hollywood’s Shifting Sands: Rumblings against Projected Film on the Life of Rommel” (1951) that Harry G. Green from the Adjutant General’s office of the Chicago branch of the American Legion, “vehemently protested the “glorification” of Rommel as an “insult” to Americans.”  

Green also called for the boycott of the film by all American Legion posts. Brady interviewed the film’s script writer Nunnally Johnson, who argued that it was the job of the Western World to judge Germans “individually and without prejudice” since the threat of fascism had ended.  

Johnson also read a statement by the U.S. High Commissioner to Germany, “who found nothing in it [that would] harm our national interest.”  

The controversy sparked over *The Desert Fox* showed that filmmakers would have to assuage critics by addressing audience expectations of German portrayals in film.  

Filmmakers met audience expectations of German roles through the use of typecasting and language. After Mason, actors who had been typecast as Prussian officers in war movies played the Field Marshal. According to Jeanine Basinger, this stereotype became popular during interwar and WWII films.  

The Prussian officer, depicted as coming from a strong military tradition and being singularly career minded, was aristocratic in bearing.
German actors most often portrayed this stereotype. The Prussian officer character helped give the audience a frame of reference to compare to previously established films and emphasized the otherness of Germans.\(^{87}\) Filmmakers also depicted German characters speaking in their native language or affecting an accent when speaking English, further enforcing the alien nature of Germanic culture.\(^{88}\) These actions helped to draw the audience into the viewing experience and helped to make war films more authentic. This also showed that when the German characters openly resisted, they were overcoming their Nazi roots and embracing American values by speaking English.

Besides using the standard combat film techniques, *The Longest Day* (1962) and *Hitler* (1962) used the Prussian officer stereotype and foreign language tracks to provide authenticity to the resistance narrative. The *Longest Day* screenplay is based on Cornelius Ryan’s monograph of the same name. Several military advisors, from both sides of the conflict, were attached to the project to ensure authenticity. Bosley Crowther writes in his article “Screen Premiere of ‘the Longest Day:’ Production by Zanuck opens at the Warner” (1962) that the film was “photographed in black-and-white to give a virtual newsreel authenticity to the vivid, realistic battle scenes.”\(^{89}\) To further increase the realism of the movie, *The Longest Day* was shot on location in “England, France, Germany and the United States [and] landing craft, amphibious, tanks, World War II planes and […] glider” were acquired, costing the Fox studio $10 million in production costs.\(^{90}\)

*The Longest Day* uses language to cement its authenticity as a historical document. The screenplay is written in English and does not have notations saying characters are speaking in another language. However, *The Longest Day* movie consists of an international cast, speaking their own languages. Rommel, played by Werner Hinz, cuts an imposing figure in *The Longest Day*’s opening sequence, where he is inspecting the fortifications at

\(^{87}\) Ibid., 124.


Normandy. Hinz’s Rommel is depicted wearing his full military regalia. Rommel’s waving of his Field Marshal’s baton and the clustering of the other Generals around him show he is an important person. When challenged about his assertion that the battle will be won on the beaches, Rommel says “I respect Field Marshal von Rundstedt. We must never forget that the venerable marshal is one of the Reich’s greatest soldiers (pause) but gentlemen, I [brief pause] I am the one charged by the Fuhrer with the task of smashing the invasion.”91 Hinz’s Rommel orders an increase in defenses and later decides to take personal leave to visit his wife on her birthday. This showed Rommel’s tender side as a good husband and family man, garnering him sympathy from filmgoers.

The inept handling of Normandy’s defenses caused Erwin Rommel and other German Generals to start openly questioning Nazi authority. Nazi General Wolfgang Hager, played by Karl John, had dispersed the majority of the Luftwaffe to deal with the Allies’ diversion at the Pas de Calais and the reserve Panzer, or ‘tank,’ divisions were held back on Hitler’s orders.92 General Blumentritt, portrayed by Curd Jurgens, tries to convince von Rundstedt that the scattered reports of paratroopers are an imminent sign of the Allied invasion, but the Field Marshal remarks “(cold and deliberate): I am not Rommel. I do not depend on a sixth sense. I’m merely an old Field Marshal who deals in cold facts.”93 Von Rundstedt has mired himself in Nazi Party politics and old style thinking; whereas Rommel is an innovative thinker and could have repelled the invasion. Rommel is touted as a genius capable of repelling the invasion, but the Allied plan’s morality is never questioned. One scene in Ouistreham shows a skirmish between French commandos and the German forces. The camera pans behind the Germans and graffiti of swastikas interspersed among the words “Heil […] Sieg Heil! Heil!!!” is visible on a wooden beam.94 The German soldiers’

91 The Longest Day Second Revised Final Script, August 31, 1961, Collection of Motion Picture Scripts 073, Box 580, Los Angeles, UCLA, 8, Scene 29.
92 The Longest Day, directed by Andrew Marton, Bernhard Wicki, Darryl F. Zanuck, and Ken Annakin (1962; Twentieth-Century Fox, 2002), DVD.
93 The Longest Day Second Revised Final Script, August 31, 1961, Collection of Motion Picture Scripts 073, Box 580, Los Angeles, UCLA, 106, Scene 207.
94 The Longest Day, directed by Andrew Marton, Bernhard Wicki, Darryl F. Zanuck, and Ken Annakin (1962; Twentieth-Century Fox, 2002), DVD.
willingness to fight to the death and their adherence to Nazi iconography shows that the Allied invasion is righteous.

The Allied invasion is imbued with moral values in *The Longest Day*, but it is ironic that the German Generals did not perceive the criminality of the Nazi regime earlier enough to stop it. Hinz’s Rommel begins to realize this at his home when he receives a call from the front about the invasion and questions why the reserve *Panzer* divisions were not deployed. After some tense dialogue, the Field Marshal “hangs up the telephone, mechanically. Frau Rommel and Manfred watch him. Rommel seems unaware of them. Moving as if in a daze he turns towards the window that looks out on the garden. Rommel: How stupid of me…how stupid of me!”

The audience is later informed that Hitler had taken a sleeping pill and was asleep during the initial phases of the invasion. This action paralyzed the Nazi high command and the *Wehrmacht* Generals were caught in the middle. By questioning the orders of the high command, Rommel and other *Wehrmacht* officers come to terms with the criminality of the Nazis, but the late hour at which they do this makes their sacrifices tragic. This shows that the German military became ‘Good Germans,’ allowing the Allies to reconcile with their former enemies in order to combat the oppressive nature of communism.

Whereas the previous two films showed Rommel as peripherally linked to the July twentieth plot and only joining it after the Nazis are depicted as militarily inept, the 1962 film *Hitler* portrays the Field Marshal as a resistance leader objecting to the Third Reich’s hold over Germany due to moral grounds. *Hitler* was an Allied Artists Pictures production directed by Stuart Heisler and written by Sam Neuman and E. Charles Straus. The film is a biographical picture that seeks to understand Hitler from a psychological standpoint. *Hitler* shares many elements of the combat film genre, such as the movie being shot in black and white and the use of a narrator and archival footage from Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* (1934). This gives it the feeling of being a documentary. For example, the movie opens

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95 The Longest Day Second Revised Final Script, August 31, 1961, Collection of Motion Picture Scripts 073, Box 580, Los Angeles, UCLA, 160, Scene 379.
96 Mitchell, 92.
97 Ibid., 94.
with an excerpt from *Mein Kampf* (1925) and Hitler’s actual voice before switching over to a narration.98

The Nazis are described in the script in unflattering terms in order to show that they are inherently evil and this creates a distinction between ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Germans. In one of the establishing shots, the narrator describes members of the Nazi high command: “Hermann Goering, a morphine addicted volupuary. Ernst Roehm, a sadistic pervert…Heinrich Himmler, sinister, inhuman executioner…Joseph Goebbels, club footed, vicious propagandist…Julius Streicher, whip carrying, rabid anti-Semite…[all] swearing absolute allegiance” to Hitler.99 The majority of the film depicts Hitler, played by Richard Basehart, as a mother obsessed cretin who fixates on youthful women such as his niece, Geli Rubal, and his mistress Eva Braun. Rubal, played by Cordula Trantow, is described as a “wholesome attractive, blond-haired young woman, about 18.”100 She is first introduced at Hitler’s mountainous retreat at Berchtesgaden, with Hitler leering at her “saliva [beginning] to show at the corner of his mouth.”101

The film *Hitler* also implies that the *Führer* engaged in homosexual activity. Homosexuality has often been viewed by the Western World as an abnormal sexual practice, because the penetration of one man by another is perceived as feminizing the male by taking on the submissive female role. Homosexuality was also perceived as disobeying the Judeo-Christian God’s decree to be “fruitful and multiply,” which made the act of sex not about propagating the species but about physical pleasure.102 These notions are used to show Hitler as being further sexually depraved. In the movie, Ernst Röhm, the leader of *Sturmabteilung* (S.A.), or ‘Storm troopers,’ is played by Berry Kroeger.103 Röhm and his deputy, Edmund Heines, are depicted in one scene preparing for an S.A. gathering. It is not openly stated in the film that the two are homosexuals, but their mannerisms and the way they carry on like a

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98 Hitler Revised Script, July 17, 1961, Collection of Motion Picture Scripts 073, Box 488, Los Angeles, UCLA, 2 Scene 2.
99 Ibid., 8, Scene 21.
100 Ibid., 11, Scene 25.
101 Ibid., 11, Scene 25.
102 Genesis. 1:28 (King James Version).
103 *Hitler*, directed by Stuart Heisler (1962; Allied Artists Pictures, 2012), DVD.
married couple make it obvious to the audience. While Röhm dresses, he shows Heines a plaque that he intends to give to Hitler. Heines reads the plaque aloud and remarks “I didn’t know you were still so sentimental about your friendship.”  

Röhm calms down his deputy by saying it is only a token award to commemorate the event, however, Hitler then bursts in with soldiers and orders the arrest and summary execution of Röhm and Heines for being traitors and perverts. After Heines is shot, Kroeger’s Röhm says “You sanctimonious hypocrite! When did you acquire this sudden morality? […] there’s another reason I must die, isn’t there Adolf? One that goes back to your barracks in 1919. Do you remember that filthy pigsty, Adolf? Best friend? You can’t permit me to live because I’m proof of your own corruption.”  

Basehart’s Hitler squirms under Röhm’s accusations, giving proof that what the S.A. leader said is true.

The Röhm sequence in Hitler takes certain liberties with history in order to foster the negative perception of the Nazis. Hitler executed the purge, colloquially known as ‘the Night of the Long Knives,’ in order to gain the support of the German military. The military leaders saw the S.A. as a potential rival. Hitler promised these leaders that he would take care of the S.A. and in return the German military would back his bid to become Chancellor. The S.A. was also a political embarrassment to the Führer. Nazi doctrine disavowed homosexuality as an immoral act, but Röhm was flagrantly open about his sexuality. When he was made Chief of Staff of the S.A. in January 1931, Röhm began enlarging the organization’s ranks by putting his homosexual friends in key leadership positions. By purging the S.A., Hitler was able to secure his powerbase. Historians have debated the Nazi leader’s sexuality, but there is no evidence that Hitler ever had an affair with Ernst Röhm. The inclusion of the dialogue by Röhm alluding to their secret affair makes the sequence more personal. This shows that Hitler stabbed his closest friends (even a lover) in the back in order to become a powerful figure.

104 Ibid.
105 Ibid.
107 Ibid., 37.
Besides painting the Nazis as morally bankrupt in their private lives, the film comments on the Holocaust. In the script, Hitler tours the Auschwitz death camp with Himmler. The *Führer* confronts a Jewish prisoner named Kaplan about his imminent demise and the Nazi’s plan to extinguish all of Europe’s Jews. Kaplan steadfastly declares that “not even [the Nazis’] bloodlust can accomplish that…we have known your kind for five thousand years…Haman…Pharaoh…Caesar…the list is endless…All perished by the hand of the lord! Your fate will be no different!”

Hitler is enraged by the prisoner’s defiance and he orders the execution of the assembled Jews. Hitler’s death sentence “only strengthen[s] their unwavering dignity. Led by Kaplan, the group softly starts to chant the Kaddish.”

Similar to the Röhm sequence, the Auschwitz scene distorts historical events in order to make the scene more personal. The presence of Hitler confronting his victims creates drama and highlights the nobility of the Jewish prisoners, but it is absent from the film. While there is ample evidence that Heinrich Himmler visited the Auschwitz death camp on several occasions, there is no concrete evidence that Hitler ever visited any of the camps.

To strive for authenticity, the film crew forgoes the ahistorical scene and instead replaced it with an animated map of Europe and a voiceover by Basehart as Hitler. Basehart goes over the aggressive moves Hitler took such as rearming Germany in violation of the Treaty of Versailles, occupying the Rhineland, threatening world peace with the annexation of Czechoslovakia and Austria, and the invasion of Poland. Basehart’s Hitler then says “Slavic peoples are to be regarded as subhuman, fit only for enslavement or extermination.”

This shows that Germans who agreed with Nazi policies either acted as perpetrators or bystanders to the Holocaust. These negative or passive traits make them ‘Bad Germans.’

The *Hitler* film posits that actively resisting the Nazis and being morally aware of the Holocaust makes someone a ‘Good German.’ After the proposed sobering scene of Kaplan’s death and the map sequence, the audience is transported to an interior shot of the Reich

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108 Hitler Revised Script, July 17, 1961, Collection of Motion Picture Scripts 073, Box 488, Los Angeles, UCLA, 108, Scene 175.

109 Ibid., 109, Scene 176.


111 *Hitler*, directed by Stuart Heisler (1962; Allied Artists Pictures, 2012). DVD.
Chancellery building with Hitler meeting various *Wehrmacht* and high command officials. The meeting is about the German defeat in Russia and what the future course of the war should be.\(^{112}\) When Rommel, played by Russian character actor Gregory Gay, stands up, Hitler glares at him with obvious hatred. Gregory Gay’s Rommel attempts to reason with Hitler to end the war in a way favorable to German interests, but the *Führer* is blinded by his scientists’ promises of super weapons.\(^{113}\) Basehart’s delusional Hitler will not tolerate further excuses and he leaves with the members of the high command, leaving the *Wehrmacht* officers behind. Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg, played by William Sargent, rises from his seat and says that it is time to act. Colonel Stauffenberg “looks at Rommel who hesitates for a moment, then nods slowly in agreement,” before he continues.\(^{114}\) After Stauffenberg lays out his plan to assassinate Hitler, “Rommel (measuring each word) [says] Colonel Stauffenberg…there can be no margin for error…our lives and the fate of Germany will depend on it!”\(^{115}\) The placement of the scene of the *Wehrmacht* officers ordering Hitler’s assassination just after the Auschwitz tour and map sequence implies that they opposed the atrocities committed by the Nazis. Sargent’s Stauffenberg plants the bomb in the Rastenberg headquarters, but the briefcase containing the explosive is moved and Hitler survives. In the next scene, Himmler and an S.S. man affix piano wire around the conspirators’ necks and hang them from hooks. The S.S. man stares at the accused with ire and asks “When will this end?” Himmler replies “not until the last one of these dogs is dead.”\(^{116}\) This shows that the German resistance movement within the *Wehrmacht* tried its utmost to oppose Hitler, even sacrificing their lives.

This change in the depiction of Rommel from being indecisive towards the plot, to being one of its principle architects is due in part to the capture of Adolf Eichmann by the Israeli intelligence agency *Mossad*. Adolf Eichmann was a bureaucrat who took the minutes of the Wannsee Conference, where the implementation of the Final Solution was

\(^{112}\) *Hitler Revised Script*, July 17, 1961, Collection of Motion Picture Scripts 073, Box 488, Los Angeles, UCLA 109, Scene 181.

\(^{113}\) Ibid., 110, Scene 181.

\(^{114}\) Ibid., 112, Scene 181.

\(^{115}\) Ibid., 112, Scene 181.

\(^{116}\) *Hitler*, directed by Stuart Heisler (1962; Allied Artists Pictures, 2012). DVD.
discussed. Eichmann was then put in charge of the deportation of Jews from the occupied territories and organized their transfer to the death camps in Poland. Mossad agents captured Eichmann in Argentina in 1960 and extradited him to Israel to stand trial for war crimes.

While the events of the Holocaust were widely known after the war, the Eichmann trial catapulted it to the realm of popular memory and revived interest in it for study.

Charles Y. Glock, Gertrude J. Selznick, and Joe L. Spaeth examine the Eichmann trial in their monograph *The Apathetic Majority: A Study Based on Public Responses to the Eichmann Trial* (1966). The study was contemporary to the trial itself and it was conducted in Oakland, California. The authors discovered that the trial itself received widespread attention due to its portrayal of anti-Semitism. Israelis hoped that by holding the trial, they could use it as a platform to create awareness about the Holocaust. It was hoped that “those with ambivalent or antagonistic feelings towards Jews would attend the trial and profit from its message.” However, people who held anti-Semitic notions were unlikely to change their opinions. The authors argue that mainstream media relied on established images about the Holocaust when covering the trial. This led people to form their opinions about Eichmann’s guilt without much knowledge of the trial proceedings. People not holding anti-Semitic notions were likely to reinforce the connection of the S.S. as a criminal organization, because it ran the death camps. Eichmann’s defense consul reiterated the claims that the S.S. Lieutenant Colonel was just following orders. This harkened back to the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunals. Wehrmacht leadership who rebelled against immoral orders showed that their organization was separate from Nazi crimes. This led Americans to

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118 Ibid., 86.
120 Ibid., 39.
121 Ibid., 54.
122 Ibid., 64.
123 Ibid., 54.
believe the Eichmann trial was a good thing and they accepted the outcomes. At least in the movies, the *Wehrmacht* became an honorable institution unblemished by Nazi ideology.
CHAPTER 4

THE DESERT WAR ON FILM

While the resistance narrative slowly gained acceptance, American and British filmmakers used the exploits of the North Africa campaign to portray the Wehrmacht as a worthy enemy. Jeanine Basinger mentions in her monograph that the geographical location depicted in a film became imbued with symbolic meanings. For example, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor shocked Americans and filmmakers used their secretive methods to depict them as racially devious.\(^\text{124}\) Since the Allied strategy in the Pacific involved island hopping, the main battleground was either in open water or in the jungle. Due to the racial nature of the Pacific Theater, Basinger asserts that open land battles became associated with the Germans.\(^\text{125}\) For the majority of WWII, the Axis Powers and the Allies did not confront each other directly in Europe. The enemies relied on extensive bombing campaigns in order to destroy the other side’s capacity to make war.

The European Theater was embroiled in total war, but the North Africa campaign became associated with chivalrous values. Patrick Major argues in his article “‘Our Friend Rommel:’ The Wehrmacht as ‘Worthy Enemy’ in Postwar British Popular Culture”\(^\text{126}\) (2008) that the North Africa Campaign became romanticized. The Allied propaganda apparatus fixated on Rommel due to his leadership ability and his battlefield reversals. Major argues that these traits harkened back to the old perception of war as a contest of strength between two opposing armies. They argued that only a commander of the Field Marshal’s caliber could defeat the Allied forces. Major asserts that although “the Rommel legend [acted as] a diversion from the failings of British commanders,” it also helped to bolster the impact of

\(^{124}\) Basinger, 63.

\(^{125}\) Ibid., 63.

Allied victories by showing how they overcame a formidable foe. This was a comforting image of war in a time where there had been massive collateral damage among the civilian population.

American and British filmmakers showed how the Allies bested the *Afrika Korps* by displaying the unity of their armed forces. According to Basinger, the American melting pot was a challenge that units had to overcome in order to defeat the enemy. Since the United States did not fight in North Africa until 1943, the British in combat films were cast as surrogate Americans. Robert Murphy’s monograph *British Cinema and the Second World War* (2000) argues that the war “provided a subject where harmony and co-operation in a common aim could be depicted without implausible distortion.” Murphy says that Great Britain as a class based society had to pull together in order to function as a wartime economy due to the Blitz and commonwealth units. The Germans began a massive bombing campaign in the fall of 1940 through May 1941. Since the bombings struck cities, the British people were forced to work together in order to rebuild. The hodgepodge of cultures from across the British Empire formed the commonwealth units, creating potential discord. The British military had to train these units to follow commands and fight as a single cohesive force in order to combat the Germans.

Twentieth-Century Fox’s *The Desert Rats* (1953) used the desert war narrative to show how the Allied Powers became a unified fighting force in order to overcome the Germans. The film was directed by Robert Wise and written by Richard Murphy. Edwin Schallert of the *Los Angeles Times* argues in his article “Trio-named for Desert Rats” (1952) that the film “will be in direct contrast to “the Desert Fox” […] since it concerns the British, Australians, New Zealanders and Canadians.” The film was shot in black and white and

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127 Ibid., 523.
128 Basinger, 29.
130 Ibid., 28.
the Commonwealth and Axis forces speak in their own languages or accented English. The film follows the British Commonwealth garrison at Tobruk.

The Australians resent the command of British officer ‘Tammy’ MacRoberts and his no nonsense attitude towards discipline. MacRoberts, played by Richard Burton, gains the respect of his men through his leadership abilities on the battlefield and his diplomatic handling of unit conflicts. Instead of court-martiaing a foolhardy lieutenant named Harry Carstairs, MacRoberts is convinced to drop his complaint by his former schoolmaster, Bartlett. When Bartlett was first introduced, he was drunk. MacRoberts ordered the men to load him into his staff car, while they marched. After Bartlett sobered up, the schoolmaster argued that the lieutenant was like MacRoberts in his youth and he would become a good officer with experience. Bartlett also stated that Carstairs gave him the alcohol in order to fortify his spirits because he is a coward. In contrast, the Afrika Korps is depicted as a cohesive fighting force under the direct control of Rommel. James Mason reprises his role as Rommel and he is described in the opening sequence of the script as being “covered with dust [and] charged with the electricity of battle.” Rommel is not an armchair General, but a master tactician who leads from the front inspiring his men to fight.

The British are able to defeat Rommel by taking advantage of his overconfidence. The unnamed lead British General develops a plan to conquer the Germans by forcing them to funnel their troops through a narrow corridor. This plan of attack would allow the British to fire mortar shells at the German tanks, disabling them, and then move on to soft targets. The General argues that although Rommel can foresee this plan, he will risk it due to his overconfidence in blitzkrieg, or ‘lightning war,’ style tactics. During a raid, MacRoberts and Carstairs are captured by the Germans and taken to a medical tent. Rommel is also ushered into the tent, with “his left arm hanging limp and the epaulet torn from his left

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132 *The Desert Rats*, directed by Robert Wise (1953; Twentieth-Century Fox, 2002), DVD.
133 *The Desert Rats* Shooting Final Script, January 14, 1952, Cinematic Arts Library Special Collections, Los Angeles, USC, 24, Scene 34.
134 Ibid., 24, Scene 33.
135 Ibid., 1, Scene C-2.
136 Ibid., 12, Scene 11.
shoulder, [appearing] dusty and in familiar battle dress.” Erwin Rommel switches from fluent German to English with a thick accent in order to strike up a conversation with MacRoberts. The English officer states that the Commonwealth General was correct when he described Rommel’s *blitzkrieg* attack as “a highly limited tactical maneuver.” Mason’s Rommel delightedly quips “Yes! Yes! It had worked well for us, but I used it once too often. I underestimated your men.” The scene shows that not only did enemies respect each other across the fog of war, but they adhered to the confines of the Geneva Convention by providing medical care to prisoners of war.

By not torturing POWS or targeting civilians, *The Desert Rats* shows that the North Africa campaign became romanticized as a virtuous conflict. Twentieth-Century Fox’s 1958 film *The Young Lions* contests this portrayal of the Wehrmacht as a chivalrous organization by having an Afrika Korps officer, Captain Hardenberg, engage in questionable behavior. Marlon Brando plays a German recruit named Christian Diestl and he is ordered by Hardenberg, played by Maximilian Schell, to execute a POW. Brando’s Diestl is “saved from performing the act, but he will not otherwise interfere with the action; a statement of his own reluctance is as far as he will go.” This shows that some enmity still existed among Western countries towards the Germans, but these films were in a minority. Rommel himself does not appear as a character in the film. In films that portray Rommel as a character, the film crews depict the Afrika Korps as following the strictures of the Geneva Convention.

The next film under examination is British Lion Film Corporation’s *Foxhole in Cairo* (1960), directed by John Moxey and written by Leonard Mosley. The film depicts the stereotypes of the ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ German by relying on the fixed location of Cairo. The desert narrative typically depicts a fast paced war with patrols charging across the desert, but *Foxhole in Cairo* predominately takes place in a night club in Cairo. Howard Thompson reviewed the film in his article “Screen: Wartime Spying: Foxhole in Cairo’’ Is British Import” (1961), and he says that this transition into the thriller genre brings up images of

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137 Ibid., 100, Scene 223.
138 Ibid., 102, Scene 223.
139 Ibid., 102, Scene 223.
other important movies such as *Casablanca* (1942). The thriller genre allows the characters to be cast as morally ambiguous. This grew out of the *film noir* and crime genres, which were popular during the 1940s. This style of film used fixed locations and camera angles in order to create psychologically charged atmospheres that reflected the moods of the characters. *Foxhole in Cairo* is filmed in black and white, and the opening shot adds to the documentary feel by using military maps of Egypt in order to situate the audience within a specific time and place. This effect is strengthened when the title is superimposed on the screen with the disclaimer “based on a true story of the war […] from the book “The Cat and the Mice” by Leonard Mosley.” These elements give the film legitimacy as a historical document in the audience’s mind.

The spy thriller aspect of *Foxhole in Cairo* makes the characters in the film morally ambiguous. Rommel, played by Albert Lieven, is planning his assault on Egypt in order to reach the Suez Canal. However, before the Field Marshal will make a move, Rommel decides to send spies from the *Abwehr*, the German intelligence agency, to infiltrate Allied headquarters at Cairo to report on British activities. John Eppler, played by Adrian Hoven, is the spy appointed by Rommel to lead the operation. The plan consists of using captured British vehicles to pose as a Long Range Desert Group patrol and drop off agents in the desert to operate a transmitter, while Eppler and another agent go into the city itself. Once in Cairo, the German agents will use an English romance novel, *Rebecca* (1938) by Daphne du Maurier, as a code manual to send encrypted messages.

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143 *Foxhole in Cairo* Release Dialogue Script, February 13, 1961, Special Collections, Beverly Hills, AMPAS, 1, Reel 1A, Scene A.

144 Ibid., 1, Reel 1A, Scene C.


146 Ibid., 8, Reel 1A, Scene 16.

147 Ibid., 1, Reel 1B, Scene 1.
The intrigue and the dreary locales of the thriller genre make the characters’ motivations less clear. This makes the characters engage in morally questionable behavior. The characters become ‘Good’ or ‘Bad’ Germans when they maintain a consistent form of behavior. Eppler is half Egyptian and he hates the British, not for any ideological imperative, but because they are occupying his country. Eppler’s girlfriend, Amina, is an Italian belly dancer employed in a seedy bar the British frequent. Eppler uses Amina’s sexuality as a tool to get close to a British courier. Eppler’s attitude towards Amina is demeaning and it shows that ‘Bad Germans’ are callous human beings who exploit others for personal gain.

The fixed setting of Cairo allowed the filmmakers to portray the characters as individual humans with distinct personalities, but as soon as they engage in morally abhorrent behavior, they suffer serious consequences. The Allied officers are generally depicted in a positive light as long as they adhere to chivalrous values. When the spies operating the desert transmitter are caught, the British abide by the Geneva Convention and treat the prisoners well. However, the British courier who was infatuated with Amina is portrayed as a pathetic character. The courier is killed due to his lack of discipline, but his death serves a purpose by ferreting out Nazi spies. Eppler abandons Amina when British Captain Robertson and Zionist agents come after him. The Jewish intelligence agents frequented the dive bar and decided to help the British in order to fight the Germans and encourage the British to dissolve the Palestinian Mandate. Jewish agent Yvette kills the hyper-sexualized Amina, and Robertson, played by James Robertson Justice, wrestles with Eppler before killing him.

The ambiguous nature of the spy operation even affects Erwin Rommel. Albert Lieven is a German actor known for being cast as the Prussian officer stereotype. Lieven’s Rommel always appears in military dress and the camera angles emphasize his authority. Close ups are used often to create an imposing screen image of Rommel. For example, in scene eight of reel one A, a close up is used when Rommel and his staff formulate the

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148 *Foxhole in Cairo*, directed by John Moxley, (1960; British Lion Film Corporation, 2005), DVD.


150 Ibid., 4, Reel, 4B, Scene 22.
infiltration plan in his headquarters. The camera directions for the sequence change to group shots in order to show Rommel’s leadership by having his staff gather around him and the map table. The positions of the German officers convey their deference to the Field Marshal and his tactical knowledge.

Lieven’s Rommel is an imposing commander, but he is defeated when he deviates from the blitzkrieg style attacks and opts for more traditional military tactics. The plan was discovered by the British when the Abwehr agents used English banknotes in a bar. Rommel is informed that the German high command had a “plan to flood all the neutral countries with forged British money, so as to upset the British currency and prevent their ability to purchase war materials” and some of the captured banknotes were supplied to the Abwehr agents. Rommel becomes enraged, exclaiming “blast and double blast. We take all the trouble to get Eppler to Cairo and they spoil our chances to keep him there by this silly detail.” Instead of fighting in the open desert and embracing chivalrous values, Rommel allows himself to become entangled in European matters, engineering his defeat. Granted the Allied victory is never questioned, but Lieven’s Rommel is cast as a ‘Good German’ because of his awareness of the Geneva Convention and his spotless battlefield record. This shows that members of the Wehrmacht were soldiers and they did not participate in criminal activity like the S.S.

During the 1970s, Rommel films highlighted American patriotism. John Bodnar states in his monograph The “Good War” in American Memory (2010) that WWII combat films had showcased American bravery in order to show the righteousness of the Allied cause and set up ideals to govern the postwar world. As the Cold War persisted, combat films began to portray soldiers operating in a moral gray area or as victims. The officer corps of the American military was highly scrutinized in postwar film. Filmmakers argued that officers had abused their positions for personal gain at the expense of their troops or that
they had cracked under combat conditions. In *Mister Roberts* (1955), James Cagney plays Lieutenant Doug Roberts.¹⁵⁷ Cagney’s Roberts stands up to his oppressive Captain who denied the sailors shore leave for his own personal gain. The sailors learn that Roberts turned down a transfer to a desired combat position in order to get them their benefits. The men work to get Roberts his transfer, but he is killed before it can occur. In *The Caine Mutiny* (1954), it is stated in a caption that mutiny was never committed aboard any U.S. naval vessel. However, one is staged on a minesweeper for the plot of the film.¹⁵⁸ The ship is run by a power-hungry Captain portrayed by Humphrey Bogart. The crew takes over the ship when Bogart’s character shows signs of cowardice during a storm. The lead mutineer, played by Van Johnson, faces a court martial but it is revealed “that Bogart’s long tenure in the war had led to emotional stress and paranoia.”¹⁵⁹

The rehabilitation of the officer corps in film occurred due to the United States’ involvement in Vietnam. The United States escalated its involvement to include ground troops, but the military draft proved controversial. The military draft included men as young as eighteen years old, but at the time only people twenty-one years of age were allowed to vote. The soldiers who fell in between this age group felt that their views were being ignored and that they were dying for a cause they did not believe in. The counterculture Hippie Movement combined with these disenfranchised soldiers, led to the creation of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement. This caused a rift in American society and filmmakers wanted to mend it. Bodnar argues that films which venerated the common soldier lacked the authority held by their superiors.¹⁶⁰ American officer centered films showed that war was an opportunity to reaffirm their masculinity.¹⁶¹ Filmmakers used the desert war to show a time where the United States was powerful and the enemy was more clearly defined. The adherence to heroic concepts, such as honor, allowed the film crews to affirm masculine traits and promote American patriotism as something to be proud of.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 142.
¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 141.
¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 141.
¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 141.
¹⁶¹ Ibid., 145.
Twentieth-Century Fox’s *Patton* (1970) helps perpetuate the romanticizing of the war by relying on traditional combat film images and advancements in technology. George C. Scott stars in the titular role and the film examines the General’s military career from 1943 to the invasion of Germany. The screenplay by Francis Ford Coppola and Edmund North is partially based on *Patton: Ordeal and Triumph* by Ladislas Farago. It is also based on General Omar Bradley’s *A Soldier’s Story*. General Bradley also served as a technical adviser to the film, giving it legitimacy. John L. Scott states in his article “Movie’s Aim: Tell Patton’s Saga the Way it Happened” (1969) that Bradley met with actor Karl Malden, who portrays the General in the film, in order to coach him. Scott also mentions that George C. Scott researched Patton in order to deliver a realistic portrayal of the General. George C. Scott even noticed “that in most of [Patton’s] photographs the general’s upper teeth are showing but not his lowers [and he] asked if the [studio] could find Patton’s dentist to find out why.” Besides extensive research into historical figures, the film used locations and props to establish its legitimacy. Scott’s article says the film was shot on location in Spain due to its similar topography to North Africa. The film crew also secured the cooperation of the Spanish military, which had WWII era equipment that had been traded to them by the American government.

*Patton* strives to present itself as an authentic historical document, but advances in technology both enhanced and negated that effect. Filmmakers experimented with three dimensional techniques since the beginning of the movie industry, but “the 3-D process [involved] two images, and special lenses to superimpose one on the other […] businessmen [argued] that moviegoers would not like wearing the spectacles necessary to attain 3-D vision.” In 1953, another process, known as Cinemascope, was pursued because it gave the illusion of depth by using a widescreen format. This process was used in big budget films.

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165 Sklar, 283.

166 Ibid., 285.
Studios used Cinemascope in war films in order “to depict the war as an epic event.” In *Patton*, the Battle of El Guettar takes place in a canyon and the area leading up to it is a sweeping expanse. The German forces march up in formation, while the Allied forces wait in hiding on the rim of the vista. These elements come together to create a layered image that relies on depth perception to create the three dimensional image.

The use of color in film also altered how people perceived the war. Black and white film made older movies appear dark and gritty, but studios wanted colored images in order to portray greater realism. Studios hoped this would adhere to audience expectations. However, studios discovered that although color “should add naturalism to films, [it] tends to do the opposite.” The use of color brightened up the dark atmosphere of war films and people began to perceive them as more of a reenactment than as a historical document. For example, in the El Guettar battle scene, the military uniforms are crisp and clean when they should be rumpled and dusty from traveling across the North African desert. The other Rommel films also did not use music extensively, whereas *Patton* has a recurring patriotic march. These elements heightened the staged element of battle scenes in the audiences’ minds, making it seem more like a nice afternoon walk in the sun than as a serious life and death situation.

*Patton* follows the desert narrative by having the Allied forces unify in order to defeat the Germans. The soldiers achieve this by embracing patriotic ideals as embodied in their commanders, like Patton. The film opens after the defeat of the American forces at the Kasserine Pass by Rommel. The corpses of the American soldiers are looted by Arabs for supplies and for profit. The military scares them off in order to preserve the sanctity of the dead. While this challenges the perception that there were no civilians in the conflict, the Arabs are never again present during a battle scene. Malden’s Bradley says that “up against Rommel we need the best tank man we’ve got. Somebody tough enough to pull this

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167 Basinger, 198.
168 *Patton*, directed by Franklin J. Schaffner (1970; Twentieth-Century Fox, 2001), DVD.
169 Basinger, 198.
170 *Patton*, directed by Franklin J. Schaffner (1970; Twentieth-Century Fox, 2001), DVD.
171 Ibid.
outfit together.” Scott’s Patton is that man and he is put in charge of the U.S. II Corps. He begins to enforce discipline immediately on his arrival. The American troops are shown as lazy, rising late in the morning and still getting dressed. Some troops are even seen cavorting around native women, implying that they are soliciting sexual favors. Patton imposes a new wakeup call and tells the mess hall to not allow anyone entry after six o’clock. While touring the barracks, Patton sees a pinup girl picture and tears it down saying “this is a barracks, not a bordello.” By enforcing discipline of the body and mind, Patton is able to unify his men into a fighting force capable of challenging the Desert Fox.

The desert narrative in Patton also emphasizes the mutual respect both sides held for each other. This shows how the war was romanticized as an honorable conflict. In the film, Scott’s Patton openly states to his staff that, even though he is a devout Christian, he believes in reincarnation. Patton takes his staff on a detour to the site of the Battle of Zama, where Scipio Africanus defeated the Carthaginians led by Hannibal Barca. The General is adamant that he was present at the battle and he is obsessed with proving himself against another great commander like Rommel. In Patton’s living quarters, a translated copy of Erwin Rommel’s Infanterie greift an is shown laying on the General’s night stand. Despite Patton’s gruff speaking style, his researching Rommel shows that he respects the Desert Fox and he wants to defeat him in battle. Before the Battle of El Guettar, Patton and his aide, Jensen, stand in the middle of a cemetery. Patton declares to Jensen that if he had his way, he’d send “that genius sonuvabitch an engraved invitation in iambic pentameter…a challenge in two stanzas to meet me alone out in the desert […] Rommel in his tank and me in mine. We’d stop at twenty paces, climb out of the turrets and shake hands. Then we’d button up and do battle…just the two of us…and that battle would decide the outcome of the war.”

Scott’s Patton gets his wish to engage the German military at the Battle of El Guettar. In the script, when the tide of battle shifts in Patton’s favor, he yells with “the highest
possible level of jubilation: Rommel, you stupid bastard, I read your book!” In the film, the word stupid is changed to magnificent, showing a greater respect towards his enemy. After the battle, Patton is informed that Rommel was not present at El Guettar, but he gains solace in the fact that the commander of the elite Herman Göring division had to have followed Rommel’s plan. Bradley tells Patton that by defeating the plan, he has in effect defeated Rommel. Patton’s general knowledge of military history, his showy outfit and sense of honor all show that his style of fighting is based on the old style of war as a competition of strength between two enemies.

The high regard held towards an enemy commander is shown from the German side as well in the movie Patton. The Germans speak their own language with English subtitles and Rommel is depicted as the Prussian officer, appearing always in uniform; the script makes special mention of the “goggles on [his] chest” to show he is always ready for combat. Rommel, played by Karl Michael Vogler, is wary of the American forces. In the film, many German commanders held little regard for the American forces after the Battle of Kasserine Pass. In one scene, Rommel gets out of his command car and meets with the staff to go over battlefield reports. A Colonel brings the Kasserine Pass report to Vogler’s Rommel and greets him with “Heil Hitler. He gets no response from Rommel.” The Colonel continues with a diatribe about the American forces as being inexperienced. Rommel is cautious and says that he “wouldn’t be so sure after one battle.” Rommel is assigned an aide named Steiger and he is ordered to create a profile on Patton. After Rommel is defeated in Africa, he is later shown preparing defense of the Atlantic Seawall. Vogler’s Rommel and Steiger believe that reports of Allied tanks after D-Day are the work of Patton, but Jodl asserts that the General is in England overseeing preparations for an attack on the Pas de Calais. When German commanders adhere to Nazi attitudes, it shows the clear

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177 Ibid., 38, Scene 142.
178 Ibid., 47, Scene 189
179 Ibid., 7, Scene B-26.
180 Ibid., 7, Scene B-26.
181 Ibid., 8, Scene B-26.
182 Ibid., 31, Scene 84.
183 Ibid., 111, Scene 313.
demarcation between ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Germans. This shows the enemy was defined as evil, whereas the ambiguous nature of the U.S. military’s involvement in Vietnam raised questions about who the enemy was. George C. Scott’s Patton is depicted as sometimes being crude and complicated, but he does not compromise the core of his being as a soldier. This patriotic center allows the audience to cheer for Patton. Rommel becomes bogged down in politics and the hierarchy of Nazi Germany, causing his eventual downfall. However, Rommel’s good qualities provide a method of reconciliation between Germany and the Allies.

Universal Studios’ *Raid on Rommel* (1971), directed by Henry Hathaway and written by James Poe and Richard Bluel, further romanticized the desert war by reinforcing previously established tropes.  

Kevin Thomas posits in his article “The Desert Fox Revisited” (1971) that “the last thing one would think [an audience] would need is still another picture on the German military wizard, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel.”  

Thomas continues by arguing that the simplicity of the movie’s narrative and its professional acting made it stand out in the audience’s minds. The film follows the standard desert narrative by having fast moving British patrols, struggling to build a cohesive unit, go against Rommel’s fortress of Tobruk. A commando named Alec Foster, played by Richard Burton, infiltrates the enemy camp and is taken to the medical unit. The medical unit consists of British POWS and they are a part of a larger convoy. The film makes specific mention that the POWS are treated under the auspices of the Geneva Convention. Major Tarkington of the medical corps tells German Captain Heinz Schroeder that “Prisoners of war [are] supposed to be sent to a safe area” to which the officer replies that the Germans captured Tobruk and “it is very safe.”

Besides adhering to the Geneva Convention, the film stresses the myth of there being no civilians in the desert in order to show that the German forces did not commit atrocities. In one scene, Major Tarkington rides with Schroeder in a troop carrier and they converse about the state of the war. Tarkington is a pacifist and he says that “war holds no romance.

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184 *Raid on Rommel*, directed by Henry Hathaway (1971; Universal Studios, 2011), DVD.  
[for him, because] the side effects are repulsive.” Schroeder argues that the North Africa campaign is a different kind of war. The German officer says “here [in the desert], there are no side effects ver steh? (enthusiastically) No women. No town to get in the way. Just men.” The repetition of these myths is based on previous works and this provides a frame of reference for the audience to draw its own conclusions. This also helped American audiences deal with current events. The guerrilla tactics of the Vietcong led American soldiers to question who was actually an enemy combatant. Some troops even participated in atrocities against civilians, such as the My Lai Massacre in 1968. The desert war allowed film audiences to go back to a time and place where the United States’ morality was not questioned. This showed that at its heart, the nation still held human rights issues as one of its core values.

Raid on Rommel depicts the British forces as a small commando unit. Within the unit, the British have to overcome their differences in order to combat a superior enemy force. Richard Burton’s character learns that some of the men in the medical corps are actually members of the 5th commando unit that he was sent to rendezvous with. The commandos plan to take over the POW convoy during a preplanned Allied air raid and then proceed to move on to Tobruk disguised as the Afrika Korps. A commando named Mackenzie says that “Rommel is building up supplies in Tobruk for his newest attack…he’s got us outmatched in the air. The only way to clobber Tobruk is from the sea. The shore guns outrange anything from the fleet.” While the commandos discuss the plan, Tarkington says he will not participate in the killing. Tarkington’s resolve is tested when his medical expertise is needed to sneak into a fuel dump by faking a typhus outbreak. While the fake Afrika Korps argues with the fuel dump guards, Rommel himself approaches. Tarkington convinces Rommel, played by Wolfgang Preiss, that the POWS have typhus. The doctor gains a personal audience with the Field Marshal due to their mutual love of stamps. Alec Foster is furious

187 Ibid., 11, Scene 54.
188 Ibid., 11, Scene 54.
189 Ibid., 20, Scene 81.
190 Ibid., 52, Scene 253.
191 Ibid., 38, Scene 262.
with Tarkington, but the medical officer says the commandos can use the diversion to inspect the camp and sabotage it.

Tarkington is a pacifist, but he had to come to terms with the fact that the Third Reich was inherently evil. He becomes more and more involved with the commandos until, finally he takes part in an action which will result in the loss of life. The film does not dismiss pacifism as an ideology, but it discusses that there is a time and a place for nonviolence and that is not during a war. By overcoming the superior German forces, the Allied Powers created a peace where these ideals could be realized. These ideals would have to be safeguarded against the spread of the equally oppressive ideology of communism. Since the film was produced during the height of the Vietnam War, the pacifistic tendencies are linked to the Anti-Vietnam War Movement. Even though the Movement has lofty ideals, its members are actually furthering the enemy agenda by fostering discord among the American populace. By embracing patriotic ideals, the United States can unify and beat communism.

Filmmakers became swept up in a patriotic fervor during WWII and they tailored their products to fit government expectations. The films served as propaganda pieces and they discussed the reasons for fighting the war, as well as eliciting sympathy for oppressed countries. After the war, combat films continued in their popularity, but they reoriented their narratives to fit a postwar context. Taking cues from the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials and the Adenauer Government, American and British filmmakers used the popular perceptions of Rommel in order to reconcile with their former enemy. Filmmakers used Field Marshal Erwin Rommel’s reputation as a military commander and resistance leader to paint the Wehrmacht and its successor, the Bundeswehr, as honorable organizations unblemished by Nazi ideology. While the resistance narrative slowly gained acceptance, the desert narrative reached a wider audience by relying on nostalgia and unity. These showed that the German military was a worthy enemy that needed to be overcome in order to end the war. Theatrical films featuring the Desert Fox became less frequent by the 1970s, but television replaced movie theatres as a form of mainstream entertainment. With this prevalent new technology, the Rommel legend would endure and be reshaped for new generations.
CHAPTER 5

THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH TELEVISION INDUSTRIES’ PORTRAYAL OF THE DESERT WAR

The American and British television industries became linked with governmental policies during WWII. Gary R. Edgerton states in his monograph *The Columbia History of American Television* (2007) that American television companies offered their technical services to aid the Allied war effort after Pearl Harbor. The partnership between the American and British governments and television companies helped spur advances in technology. After the war, returning servicemen were interested in starting families and the middle class, armed with disposable income, wanted homes and consumer affluence denied to them during wartime. The few television stations wanted to expand their reach in the early postwar years, but the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) imposed a licensing freeze in 1948. The FCC grew “concerned about signal interference between stations” that were too close to one another and held the freeze until 1952. Powerful broadcast towers were built across the United States in order to accommodate America’s growing consumer base. Besides granting licenses, the United States government deemed what was acceptable to air on television. The emerging Cold War led politicians to exaggerate the communist threat, with people having suspicions of communist sympathizers or agitators. The resulting ‘Red Scare’ caused the entertainment industry to fall under suspicion because films could convey ideas to its audience, and television directly connected with people in their own homes.

193 Ibid., 105.
194 Ibid., 141.
Television companies expounded American values within their programming in order to assuage government concerns. The medium of television required shows to be shot in static locations and used close up shots to connect with audiences by creating an intimate atmosphere. Television companies used these restrictions to generate cheap, consumable programs. John E. O’Connor’s edited work *American History, American Television: Interpreting the Video Past* (1983) argues that these cheap programs were adapted from vaudeville acts and radio dramas, as well as documentaries. Early live shows, like the *Texaco Star Theatre* hosted by Milton Berle, appealed to urban communities due to their vaudeville background. These shows were defined by variety acts, such as “acrobats, jugglers, dancers, and unicyclists,” as long as they could fit within the confines of the stage.

The live shows and situation comedies showed that American audiences wanted to be entertained, but television documentaries showed that people also wanted to digest educational material. A major focus of documentarians was WWII. The documentary series *You Are There*, was adapted from the radio program *CBS IS There*. The series did not use professional historians, but it employed a fulltime staff of researchers. They examined primary and secondary resources to ensure that the television programs were historically accurate. The series employed journalists as a framing device by having them comment on historical events as if they were currently happening. The voice-over by journalists helped establish the series’ authenticity as a historical document. For contemporary events, such as WWII, actual newsreel footage was used to further cement its authenticity. However, the series used actors and constructed elaborate sets to recreate historical events. This blurred the line between real life and fantasy and gave rise to the new genre known as the docudrama. The docudrama would achieve prominence in the miniseries and television movie formats.

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196 Ibid., 64.
197 Ibid., 80.
198 Ibid., 82.
199 Ibid., 93.
The miniseries and television movie formats emerged in the United States due to the involvement of the film industry and the success of British serial dramas. Motion picture companies were initially reluctant to get involved with the new medium of television. Studio executives believed that television was a frivolous novelty that the American populace would eventually get tired of. In 1948, the Supreme Court ruled against Paramount, Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer, Radio-Keith-Orpheum, Twentieth-Century Fox, Warner Brothers, Universal, United Artists, and Columbia Pictures in a case that argued that these studios operated “as an illegal cartel that indulged in a number of longstanding monopolistic practices.” The studios relinquished control of their exhibition holdings, such as the United Paramount Theater (UPT). UPT acquired the American Broadcasting Company (ABC), a television and radio studio, in a deal approved by the FCC in 1953. These merged companies then entered into an agreement with the Walt Disney Company in 1954, where the former agreed to pay the latter “$2,000,000 for one season of programs [that were] renewable for a total of seven years.” The television programs also helped promote Disney’s new theme park Disneyland.

The Disney programming proved to be popular and other film companies scrambled to get into the television business. These studios sold their backlog of films to television production companies. War films were especially popular due to the action sequences and they helped reinforce Cold War aims. The Longest Day aired as a full evening primetime special on ABC for the Halloween of 1971. Patton was considered such a monumental war film that it was aired on ABC one year after its release. When the movie catalog became exhausted, the studios focused their efforts on creating original programming.

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201 Ibid., 182.
202 Ibid., 183.
204 “‘Patton’ Film Epic Arrives Tonight,” Los Angeles Times (1923-current file); November 19, 1972; proquest historical newspapers: Los Angeles Times (1881-1988), V3.
205 Edgerton, 190.
charged television networks roughly $1 million in order to air more current movies.\textsuperscript{206} Television networks realized that making their own products would help cut costs and some of these television movies could serve as pilots for potential series. American television executives saw the success of the British miniseries and television movie format and purchased the rights to air them. These executives hoped that these programs would be as successful a ratings coup in the American market, as they had been overseas. These shows were typically based on novels with a historical backdrop and relied on the extensive use of melodrama. Some early examples of the miniseries format are \textit{QBVII} (1974), \textit{Rich Man, Poor Man} (1976), and \textit{Roots} (1977). The success of these miniseries allowed television companies to pursue their own projects.\textsuperscript{207} This convinced executives to air more miniseries and develop their own made for television movies, making them a staple in ratings heavy months. These formats were the first to feature Erwin Rommel as a character portrayed by an actor in programs specifically made for television.

The desert war narrative appeared on television due to its nostalgic appeal. Events such as the United States’ withdrawal from Vietnam and the resignation of President Richard Nixon upset American society. Similar to the 1970 Rommel films, the desert war on television revisited a time when the United States was relatively unified and its people could be unabashedly patriotic. American patriotism was seen as a way of repairing the social fabric of the United States. The television programs \textit{The Key to Rebecca} (1985), \textit{The Winds of War} (1983) and \textit{War and Remembrance} (1988) followed the precedents set by the narrative’s filmic predecessors. These miniseries established their authenticity as historical documents by basing themselves on bestselling novels that were extensively researched. The production crews strengthened the authenticity of the programs by cooperating with international governments by filming on location and securing authentic military equipment. Television writers emphasized the clean nature of war in the desert arena and showed that the Allies became united in order to defeat a superior force. The medium of television still meant that the miniseries relied on close-up shots to create an intimate atmosphere and created an


\textsuperscript{207} De Vito, et al., 12.
illusion of movement, disguising the static sets. These programs also used stereotypes to increase the melodramatic tone to boost ratings.

*The Key to Rebecca* miniseries used the positive perception of Erwin Rommel in order to promote the reconciliation between Germany and the Western World. The series was divided into two parts and it was “produced for the syndicated “operation primetime” anthology.” It was directed by David Hemmings, with the script written by Samuel Harris. The script was based on author Ken Follett’s 1980 novel. The plot follows the same historical event as *Foxhole in Cairo*, but it takes greater liberties by changing character names and motivations to fit a miniseries docudrama format. Its basis on an actual historical event and the miniseries’ shooting on location in Tunisia give it legitimacy. Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, portrayed by Robert Culp, sends German operative Alex Wolff to infiltrate the Allied forces’ headquarters in Cairo. Wolff uses a belly dancer named Sonja El Aram to extract secrets from a British officer. The German spymaster is in turn pursued by Major William Vandam and a Jewish spy named Elene Fontana.

The novel *The Key to Rebecca* was published in 1980. The date is significant because this occurred after the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty. The treaty was signed by Egyptian President Anwar El Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, and was witnessed by U.S. President Jimmy Carter. This treaty was a momentous event, ending a state of war that had existed between Israel and Egypt since 1948. Besides mutually recognizing each other’s existence, Israel withdrew its troops from the Sinai Peninsula (captured during the 1967 Six-Day War) and Egypt granted traffic from the Jewish state passage through the Suez Canal. In Follett’s novel, Sadat and officers of the Egyptian army try to contact Rommel in order to kick the British out of Egypt. Follett used Sadat’s actual WWII experiences and the political climate of the time in order to show how far both sides had come. The Germans and Egyptians had refused to recognize the rights of Jews, but both parties were able to reconcile their national legacies in order to strive for peace. However, Sadat’s character is

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209 *The Key to Rebecca*, directed by David Hemmings (1985; Viavision, 2011) DVD.

missing from the miniseries. This is due to the Egyptian President’s assassination in 1981. The film crew omitted the Arab leader’s subplot as a sign of respect, but the miniseries still shows that the United States and Germany could reconcile their differences in order to combat the Soviet Union.

*The Key to Rebecca* uses the limitations of television and its stereotypes in order to connect with the home television audience. This intimacy helps reinforce American values. Alex Wolff, played by David Soul, takes over as a fictionalized version of Eppler. *Foxhole in Cairo*’s Eppler used his mixed Germanic and Egyptian background as justification for liberating Egypt from English colonization, but Wolff has definite Nazi leanings. Whereas Eppler was quickly ferried into Cairo, Wolff is shown laboriously crossing the desert, negotiating with Bedouin tribes and enters the city by killing an English Corporal.\(^\text{211}\) These scenes are brief, intercut throughout the main narrative, in order to disguise the fixed sets of the Cairo buildings. This establishes Soul’s character as a lone wolf who uses his intelligence and cunning to outsmart the British. Wolff can be perceived as a shadow of what Paul De Vito and Frank Tropea refer to as the adventurer archetype in their monograph *Epic Television Miniseries: A Critical History* (2010). The adventurer is “usually connected to the American ideals of wide-open spaces, the connection back to the openness of Eden: the visionary equation between an Edenic pastoral and the inviting sense of an endless space always beyond the horizon.”\(^\text{212}\) Wolff’s association with the open desert drives the plot of the story with his freedom of movement behind enemy lines.

The belly dancer Sonja El Aram differs from Amina in *Foxhole in Cairo* by being even more sexualized. Sonja El Aram, portrayed by actress Lina Raymond, is a voracious and vain bisexual. Sonja only agrees to help Wolff if the German officer will find her another plaything like her presumably deceased lover Tanya.\(^\text{213}\) De Vito and Tropea would classify Sonja El Aram as an archetypal whore. The whore archetype provides “comfort and support to the poor, beleaguered hero in any way, shape, or form she possibly could” and exists

\(^{211}\) *The Key to Rebecca*, directed by David Hemmings (1985; Viavision, 2011) DVD.

\(^{212}\) De Vito, et al., 3.

\(^{213}\) *The Key to Rebecca*, directed by David Hemmings (1985; Viavision, 2011) DVD.
primarily to indulge the audience’s sexual fantasies.\textsuperscript{214} This is typified in the scene where Wolff lays out his plan to get information from the English. Wolff and Sonja El Aram indulge themselves by taking a bath. Wolff shaves Sonja’s legs and tells her he will get close to the general staff by offering her up. When Sonja asks why she should do it, the camera closes in as Wolff leans forward and says “you hate them and you love me.”\textsuperscript{215} These characters exist to satisfy their own cravings and use other people to advance in society, making them ‘Bad Germans.’

Alex Wolff and Sonja El Aram act as opposites to the Allied characters in order to show the righteousness of the Allied cause. The actual hero and adventurer of the story is Major William Vandam, played by Cliff Robertson. Unlike Wolff, the Major is depicted as a family man. His wife died in a Luftwaffe raid in Crete and Vandam lives with his son Billy in Cairo.\textsuperscript{216} The Major meets Elene Fontana, played by Susan Hubley, through a Jewish man named Herschel. He is a member of the Jewish Intelligence network and he tells the Major that Elene wants to travel to Palestine. Robertson’s Vandam agrees to pay for her passage if Elene helps capture Wolff. Elene is transformed into the whore archetype when Vandam gets her an apartment and visits her to keep the appearance that they are lovers.\textsuperscript{217} Hubley’s Elene fulfills the sexual fantasy of the adventurer, but she is redeemed through the relationship, unlike Sonja El Aram. Robertson’s Vandam invites Elene to his apartment and reveals in the cozy set of his study that his marriage was not a happy one and that they only stayed together in order to rebel against their parents. Vandam’s wife had an affair with a Royal Air Force pilot and they died together in the bombing in Crete.\textsuperscript{218} Elene fulfills an emotional need for Vandam and she begins to play a motherly role to Billy Vandam, becoming an archetypal wife and mother.\textsuperscript{219}

\textsuperscript{214} De Vito, et al., 4.
\textsuperscript{215} The Key to Rebecca, directed by David Hemmings (1985; Viavision, 2011) DVD.
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{219} De Vito, et al., 4.
Rommel is depicted as the Prussian officer stereotype in *The Key to Rebecca*. Culp’s Rommel is only shown onscreen wearing his *Afrika Korps* uniform. Rommel’s appearances are usually accompanied by a military march on the soundtrack and he is first depicted exiting a truck coming from the desert front. This shows that the Field Marshal leads his men by setting an example. The German soldiers follow Rommel due to his battlefield experience. Culp’s Rommel also speaks with a German accent to highlight his otherness. The Desert Fox’s guile as a tactician explains why he is feared and admired by his enemies, but his distinctive German personality shows that he is tacitly condoning Nazi agendas.

The *Wehrmacht* is defeated in *The Key to Rebecca* because it acted to further the Nazi conquest. Erwin Rommel is introduced to the audience after Wolff is shown communing with the Bedouins in the desert. The scene’s placement shows that Culp’s Rommel is already committed to his course of action. Rommel meets with Field Marshal Kesselring, who is shown wearing a powder blue uniform distinctive of the *Luftwaffe*. The color clashes with Rommel’s khaki uniform, creating a separation between the two as one being a soldier and the other as a member of the German high command. Kesselring in a thick, almost undecipherable accent says that he waited for Rommel over a period of hours and that “even British Generals keep in touch with their headquarters.” Culp’s Rommel replies to Kesselring’s quip that “perhaps that is why [the British] lose battles and I win them,” showing that the Desert Fox is a great tactician who is able to exploit the enemy’s weakness. Rommel’s overconfidence and the linkage with Nazi officials signal the downfall of the *Wehrmacht*. The British uncover counterfeit banknotes used by Wolff and Sonja El Aram sells out her lover after Vandam tortures her by cutting her hair.

*The Key to Rebecca* received positive to mixed reviews due to its attention to period detail and blatant use of stereotypes. Jon Anderson of the *Chicago Tribune* argues that the

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220 *The Key to Rebecca*, directed by David Hemmings (1985; Viavision, 2011) DVD.

221 Ibid.

222 Ibid.

223 Ibid.

224 Ibid.
miniseries’ attention to detail kept viewers interested in a spy yarn, even though “most viewers know how World War II turned out.”

Anderson continues by stating that “the acting is first class [and] so is the scenery, as the action leapfrogs across North Africa.” This shows that the crew of The Key to Rebecca used the limitations of its medium more effectively than the theatrically released Foxhole in Cairo by using its longer running time and various sets to create an illusion of movement. John Corry of the New York Times wrote that the film was “reasonably civilized and moderately entertaining,” but the miniseries’ real strengths came from its setting in Tunisia. Corry argues that the film suffers when it uses constructed sets like “restaurants and plazas [that are] peopled with extras, self-consciously passing through.” He also states that Robert Culp was horribly miscast as Rommel, who affected “an accent like Sid Caesar.” These elements, combined with the lack of collateral damage amongst the civilian population, forge an artificial image of war that brings the viewer out of the experience.

The Winds of War and War and Remembrance provide a transition between the desert war and resistance narratives. The Winds of War is a seven part miniseries produced by ABC and directed by Dan Curtis. The scripts were written by Herman Wouk. A sequel to The Winds of War was produced by ABC called War and Remembrance. This miniseries was also directed by Curtis, who in turn doubled as a writer along with Herman Wouk and Earl W. Wallace. These two miniseries were adapted from Wouk’s novels that he meticulously researched from 1971 to 1978. The audience follows the paths of two families, the Henrys, an American middleclass clan with a naval tradition, and the Jastrows, a group of secular American Jews, throughout the course of WWII.

These miniseries establish their legitimacy as historical documents by conforming to the models set in the combat film. The Winds of War and War and Remembrance were both

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226 Ibid.


228 Ibid.

229 Ibid.
shot on location in the United States and in seven countries across Europe. The set designers worked with military advisers and government officials when they staged momentous events. Cecil Smith of the New York Times wrote in his article “Wouk’s ‘Winds of War’: Never Rains, Just Pours” that the final day of shooting for The Winds of War coincided with the fortieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor. The crew staged the devastating Japanese raid at Port Hueneme and used “actual destroyers and other vessels mostly used for target practice” by the United States navy to create a mock pacific fleet. In War and Remembrance, the production company even secured rights to shoot on location at the Auschwitz Memorial from the Polish government. ABC erroneously reported it was the first time permission had been granted to film at the death camp, but it was the first time that one of the “crematoriums was recreated on the site” from actual plans located in the Auschwitz archives. The two miniseries also interspersed documentary footage, shot in black and white film stock, narrated by William Woodson to add to its authenticity. Legitimacy is further cemented through the use of language by using subtitles or having German characters speak with an accent.

The Winds of War and War and Remembrance establish the desert narrative by having the Allied Powers confront superior Axis forces and by showing the mutual respect held by both sides. Erwin Rommel does not appear as a character in The Winds of War, but he is continuously mentioned in radio broadcasts in the first half of War and Remembrance. These broadcasts occur at vulnerable moments for the Allied characters. In part two, Leslie Slote, an American diplomat played by David Dukes, visits with Jacob and Selma Ascher. They are a Jewish couple from Switzerland and the two help Slote contact Father Martin. The Priest has photographic evidence of atrocities against Jews taken by Berel Jastrow. Duke’s Slote turns on the radio in his car after the meeting and the broadcaster reports “meanwhile in North Africa, in a series of lightning strikes, the German panzer divisions of Field Marshal

231 Ibid.
233 War and Remembrance, directed by Dan Curtis (1988; MPI Home Video, 2008), DVD.
Rommel have recovered nearly all the ground won by British forces at the turn of the year.” 234 This makes the situation urgent because Berel Jastrow’s cousin and Slote’s ex-fiancée, Natalie, is being held by the Germans along with her uncle and son. If Rommel is not stopped, it is implied that the criminal acts of the Nazis will continue and directly kill off characters that the audience has come to care about.

The inclusion of references about the Holocaust in *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance* reflects the popularization of the event by the 1978 miniseries *Holocaust: The Story of the Family Weiss*. 235 The series was originally broadcast in the United States over four nights. Its successful stint in the ratings allowed the *Holocaust* miniseries to receive an international release, where it was viewed by “222 million people in fifty countries.” 236 This generated interest about the Holocaust in the United States during the 1980s when the National Holocaust Memorial Commission was making plans to expand Holocaust in education and eventually build the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. 237

The desert narrative ends in *War and Remembrance* by focusing on the admiration felt by both sides and the good treatment of prisoners of war. In part four of *War and Remembrance*, Alistair ‘Talky’ Tubsbury, a war correspondent played by Robert Morley, tours the aftermath of the Battle of El Alamein. Morley’s Tubsbury surveys burnt out husks of German tanks and watches columns of POWS march by. Tubsbury eulogizes the conflict by stating that “here at El Alamein the Afrika Korps died (and) the Korps was a legend […] a dashing, clear cut enemy, a menace and at the same time [possessing] a sort of glory; in Churchillian rhetoric, a gallant foe worthy of our steel.” 238 Tubsbury’s vehicle hits a landmine and he is instantly killed. The correspondent’s death shows that the Allies also received casualties and his final tragic words about the valor of his enemy allow the viewer

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234 Ibid.
235 Shandler, 159.
237 Shandler, 175.
238 *War and Remembrance* Part Four (scenes 738 thru 946) Final Shooting Script, October 1985, Performing Arts Special Collections 1, Box 98, Folder 5, Los Angeles, UCLA, 81, Scene 823.
to reconcile their feelings about the German military. The *Afrika Korps* become surrogate Americans, allowing the Allies to focus on the real bastion of Nazi power in Europe.
CHAPTER 6

THE RESISTANCE NARRATIVE ON TELEVISION

The resistance narrative on television portrayed WWII in a more realistic manner by focusing on personal trauma and the evolution of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The desert war narrative remained a staple of the Rommel television format, but its nostalgic tone conflicted with a growing sense of what war was actually like. Rick Worland argues in his article “The Other Living-Room War: Prime Time Combat Series, 1962-1975” (1998) that the American television audience was affected by the Vietnam War. Television writers recognized this internal tension within American society and explored it through their works. The setting of WWII allowed television writers to explore themes such as trauma and neutrality in a time period that was pleasing to the American consciousness. The comfortable nature of WWII allowed the United States to work through societal differences and reaffirm Cold War aims. This showed that the United States and its Allies could move past serious trauma with time and commit to the fight against communism.

Worland discusses this approach to portraying WWII realistically in his overview of the television series *Combat!* (1962). It ran for five straight seasons and it followed an American platoon’s journey from the D-Day invasion through their battles in France. The soldiers of King Company were depicted in the early episodes as naïve, treating war as an exciting adventure. As the war progressed, the soldiers became battle hardened by facing difficult situations. The episode entitled “Hills are for Heroes” shows this world weary approach by having the soldiers capture a German pillbox located at the crest of a hill. After completing their objective, the soldiers of King Company are ordered to retreat and prepare

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240 Ibid., 5.
241 Ibid., 7.
for a German counterattack. Kirby, played by Jack Hogan, angrily yells at his commanding officer “No! We took the hill! This man here (points to corpse) I don’t even know his name. He can’t come down.”242 The violence of the war shows that some of the battles are ultimately futile, but the strong moral nature in the struggle against oppressive regimes gives the conflict meaning. The trauma needs to be overcome in order to unite against communism.

Worland also shows how a Cold War narrative could be incorporated into a realistic WWII drama by exploring the relationship between neutral countries. These nations stood in for the potential client states of the two superpowers. Neutral individuals are to be mistrusted until they choose a side in the conflict. In the episode “Mountain Man,” the character Sergeant Chip Sanders, played by Vic Morrow, enlists the help of a hunter to locate a mountain pass for the Allied advance. The hunter had grown disenchanted with modern society and withdrew from it to live alone in the mountains. When the Sergeant asks for his help, the man “agrees to guide Sanders only in exchange for an American rifle.”243 This personally benefits the hunter and it shows that neutral countries are profiting at the expense of others. The hunter eventually comes over to the Allied side after escaping the Germans and he refuses the payment of the rifle. This shows that the United States needed to woo potential allies as client states in order to curb the spread of communism during the Cold War. The Germans in the realistic Rommel television programs are cast as potential Allies due to their upstanding moral nature.

Western television writers appropriated Holocaust imagery to bolster resistance narratives in programs featuring Field Marshal Rommel. The earlier depictions of the resistance narrative in film focused on the distinction between ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Germans. However, the Holocaust was not mentioned extensively in the resistance narrative. Peter Novick’s article “The American National Narrative of the Holocaust: There Isn’t Any” (2003) argues that the Holocaust’s dark atmosphere became tied to the resistance narrative on television because it satisfied the needs of the audience for a realistic view of war. He states that the Holocaust was transformed into an American national narrative due to its emphasis

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242 Ibid., 8.
243 Ibid., 10.
on trauma and remembrance.\textsuperscript{244} The Holocaust did not occur in the United States and it did not directly affect most Americans with only “1% of the population” consisting of Jewish stock.\textsuperscript{245} A more pertinent exploration of WWII for the United States would be the Pacific Theater where most of the fighting directly affected soldiers.\textsuperscript{246} The Holocaust became Americanized by emphasizing the need to prevent injustices.

The trauma of the Nazis camps not only affected the Jews, but the Germans as well. The period of time between WWII and a television program’s airing showed that the Germans reconciled with their dark national legacy. During the early 1970s, the West German Chancellor Willy Brandt began reforming German politics by disavowing the actions of radical left-wing groups. These groups supported terrorist acts, such as the hijacking of a \textit{Lufthansa} plane in Mogadishu.\textsuperscript{247} Brandt and his supporters viewed these actions as being similar to the radical groups, such as the Nazis, that vied for power during the ineffectual Weimar Republic.\textsuperscript{248} To combat these destructive influences, the Brandt Government seized Holocaust remembrance as a focal point in foreign policy to strengthen ties with other European countries. Brandt even visited the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial in Poland.\textsuperscript{249} This allowed Germany to rejoin the ranks of Western society and act as a client state of the United States. This trauma also showed that similar internal divisions could be overcome in the United States, making one traumatic event act as catharsis for the other.

\textit{The Winds of War} (1983) and \textit{War and Remembrance} (1988) graphically depicted the horrors of the Holocaust in order to both authenticate the audiences preconceptions of war, as well as to categorize what constituted ‘Good’ and ‘Bad’ Germans. However, the writers understood that Americans needed to identify with Jewish characters. A new stereotype was added to the miniseries repertoire, the heroic slave, to show graphic violence against the

\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{248} Ibid., 235.
\textsuperscript{249} Ibid., 236.
human body. Annette Insdorf argues in her monograph *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust* (2003) that films and television programs featuring the Holocaust typically use a narrative format where women and children are shown bearing the brunt of violence directed at Jews by the Nazis. This elicits empathy in the audience and an innate need to protect the weak. The audience further identifies with the suffering of Jews by casting them as being part of the middle class, making them surrogate Americans.

*The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance* Americanize the Holocaust experience through the Jastrow family’s trials. Natalie Jastrow, played initially by Ali MacGraw and later by Jane Seymour, is an American Jew who has become divorced from her religion, living a secular life. She later marries Byron Henry, who joins the navy as a submariner. Natalie’s Uncle Aaron Jastrow, who was first portrayed by John Houseman and after that actor’s death John Gielgud, is a famous author who converted to Christianity. After the war starts, Natalie remains in Europe in order to get Aaron Jastrow an American passport. Natalie is further forced to remain in Europe after she becomes pregnant with Byron’s child. By casting the Jastrows as living secular lives, the writers were able to get the audience to identify with the characters. The trauma inflicted by the horrors of the Nazi regime causes these characters to undergo a transformative experience, which the audience views and extrapolates to their own lives.

The production crew uses intimate settings to connect with the viewer by showing personal relationships and by increasing the intensity of the violence. The Jastrows, and by extension the audience, begin the transformative experience when they are confronted by Werner Beck. As they attempt to leave Europe aboard a ship setting sail to Palestine,

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250 De Vito, et al., 90.


252 Ibid., 24.

253 *The Winds of War*, directed by Dan Curtis (1983; Paramount, 2004), DVD.

254 Ibid.

255 Ibid.

256 *War and Remembrance*, directed by Dan Curtis (1988; MPI Home Video, 2008), DVD.
Natalie’s son Louis gets sick. Werner Beck, a German foreign ministry official and former student of Aaron’s played by Bill Wallis, boards the vessel and convinces the two to leave in order to get Louis treatment. Wallis’ Beck is an unassuming man, described as “a stoutish, harmless looking man in his late thirties, with glasses and a bookish air [...] his voice prim and high.” Beck and Aaron Jastrow are typically shown speaking in enclosed rooms like the latter’s study. The piggish looking official comes up with the idea to use his former mentor to make anti-Allied radio broadcasts and Beck gets permission from Adolf Eichmann. Gielgud’s Aaron Jastrow does not want to make the broadcasts. When Jastrow takes Natalie and Louis to escape, they are cornered by Beck, who is now sporting an S.S. uniform.

The Jastrows are then sent to Thereseinstadt, a “model” ghetto used by the Nazis to debunk the claims of atrocities by allowing Red Cross and other officials to visit it. Aaron and Natalie Jastrow meet Adolf Eichmann in Thereseinstadt. The S.S. officer wants the former professor to act as the Jewish elder to the Department of Culture in the ghetto. After Aaron declines, Eichmann dismisses Natalie and then has the professor beaten by a man named Burger. Adolf Eichmann is shown in a close up, calmly smoking a cigarette, while Burger hovers over the prostrate professor yelling “did you think that you were still in America?! [...] you’re in Thereseinstadt!” The intimacy of the enclosed spaces such as the hold of the ship, Jastrow’s study and Eichmann’s office make the violence more localized and frightening to the viewer. This shows that the Nazis are opportunists who betray people they know in order to get status. Aaron and Natalie begin to reconnect to their Jewish heritage because of the Nazi brutality. Aaron teaches the Torah to the ghetto residents and

257 The Winds of War, directed by Dan Curtis (1983; Paramount, 2004), DVD.
258 War and Remembrance, directed by Dan Curtis (1988; MPI Home Video, 2008), DVD.
259 War and Remembrance Part Four (scenes 738 thru 946) Final Shooting Script, October 1985, Performing Arts Special Collections 1, Box 98, Folder 5, Los Angeles, UCLA, 33, Scene 413.
260 War and Remembrance, directed by Dan Curtis (1988; MPI Home Video, 2008), DVD.
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid.
263 War and Remembrance Part Six (scenes 1178 thru 1369) Final Shooting Script, November 1985, Performing Arts Special Collections 1, Box 105, Folder 3, Los Angeles, UCLA, 165, Scene 1364.
264 Ibid., 169, Scene 1365.
Natalie learns to speak Yiddish. This shows the ethnic diversity of the United States. This reflects the shift in the United States to the multicultural ideal. Multiculturalism celebrated the medley of the cultures in American society. The diversity of the American melting pot is touted as strength. The homogenous structure of totalitarian governments, like the Third Reich and Soviet Union, is a weakness.

The ‘Good Germans’ are the converse of their Nazi counterparts, shown to be using their positions to check atrocities and conspire to kill Hitler. The Wehrmacht officers in *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance* are shown to originally back Hitler because the Third Reich lifted the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles on the military. After Hitler, played by Steven Berkoff, declares war on the United States the Wehrmacht Generals reevaluate their leader’s decisions. General Brauchitsch argues that although an alliance existed between Germany and Japan, the Japanese attacked the United States first “so there was no treaty obligation.” Berkoff’s Hitler further bungles the war by not providing reinforcements for the North Africa campaign. The fictional Brigadier General Armin von Roon, played by Jeremy Kemp, declares that “with even minimum support, Rommel can still break through to the Suez—maybe to the Persian Gulf! (and) A magnificent opportunity is being squandered!” This shows that the Germans, though originally supporting the war, are now fighting against the Nazis and their corrupt practices.

The resistance narrative humanizes Rommel by showing him struggle with his conscience and act against the Third Reich. Prior to his actual appearance, Rommel was only depicted as a presence on the radio. This inflated Rommel’s status to the viewer by reinforcing the legend of the Afrika Korps. Rommel is played by German actor Hardy Kruger and he speaks with either an accent or in fluent German. This coupled with Rommel always appearing in military dress enhances the Prussian officer stereotype. Rommel is introduced by the narrator after the defeat in North Africa on his way to Berlin to meet with Hitler. The

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266 War and Remembrance Part One (scenes 1 thru 212) Final Shooting Script, September 1985, Performing Arts Special Collections 1, Box 98, Folder 2, Los Angeles, UCLA, 65, Scene 67.

267 War and Remembrance Part Four (scenes 738 thru 946) Final Shooting Script, October 1985, Performing Arts Special Collections 1, Box 98, Folder 5, Los Angeles, UCLA, 29, Scene 770.
narration continues to bolster the Rommel legend by showing he is a soldier first. The narrator states that Rommel “returned to Berlin in an effort to pull his troops out of Africa (and) he was never allowed to return to his command.” Berkoff’s Hitler recognizes that he has bungled the North Africa campaign and says that he should have listened to Rommel’s advice. Hitler wants Rommel as his military adviser because he is a “plain speaker [and] an old fighter.” Kruger’s Rommel speaks plainly by demanding that Hitler end the war and even provides the Führer a pathway to peace by disavowing “certain activities in Poland of…the SS…of Himmler.” The camera favors Hitler as he yells “Himmler--?!What concern is he of yours--?! Himmler’s job is internal security.” At this point Rommel becomes committed to the anti-Hitler conspiracy in order to depose the Führer.

The interaction between Rommel and his family against the backdrop of the D-Day invasion and the July twentieth assassination attempt humanizes the Field Marshal by portraying him as a husband and father. This affirms the traumatic aspect of the resistance narrative by relying on melodrama. Kruger’s Rommel is put in charge of the Atlantic Seawall, but he still has the time to go home and celebrate his wife’s birthday. After the Allied invasion begins, Rommel is awoken by a phone call and he tells his wife that he must go. The two kiss and as Rommel exits, the camera holds on Frau Rommel’s “sad but proud expression.” The production crew uses the intimate setting of Rommel’s home to show him in a vulnerable position. The Field Marshal is fighting for his family and consequently Germany’s future, but this future is one still controlled by the Nazis. Rommel is shown in his command car in France, being pursued by a spitfire. In this scene Kruger’s Rommel speaks in German, ordering his men to “pull off to that lane ahead” in order to evade the plane.

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268 War and Remembrance Part Six (scenes 1178 thru 1369) Final Shooting Script, November 1985, Performing Arts Special Collections 1, Box 105, Folder 3, Los Angeles, UCLA, 21, Scene 1199B.
269 Ibid., 23, Scene 1201.
270 Ibid., 25, Scene 1201.
271 Ibid., 25, Scene 1201.
272 War and Remembrance Part Seven (scenes 1370 thru 1531) Revised Script, November 1985, Performing Arts Special Collections 1, Box 105, Folder 4, Los Angeles, UCLA, 139, Scene 1478.
273 Ibid., 1465, Scene 1492.
274 War and Remembrance Part Eight (scenes 1532 thru 1816) Final Shooting Script, December 1985, Performing Arts Special Collections 1, Box 105, Folder 5, Los Angeles, UCLA, 23, Scene 1574.
The command car cannot outrun the spitfire, and a helicopter shot shows the plane “swoop down and after the speeding command car, a huge spume of dust kicking up from behind.”275 The movie quality budget helps heighten the drama by using actual planes and pyrotechnics to have the command car flip over leaving a prostrate Rommel on the side of the road.276 The use of subtitled German shows that Kruger’s Rommel is misguided in his defense of Germany by bogging down the Allies in France. This action serves the Nazis by prolonging the conflict. The anti-Hitler conspiracy moves ahead without Rommel, but they fail and are subsequently rounded up and executed.277

Rommel’s death in War and Remembrance highlights how melodrama can be used to connect with an audience and convey trauma in the resistance narrative. The Field Marshal’s death had not been extensively touched on before its depiction in War and Remembrance, and the production crew uses this to their advantage. The force of Hitler’s inquisition eventually finds Rommel and he is forced to commit suicide. Kruger’s Rommel meets with his executioners and he informs his wife of his decision to kill himself. Rommel’s wife is not given any dialogue in this scene and as it transitions to the next segment, a piercing wail is heard from the soon to be widow off screen.278 Kruger’s Rommel tells his son Manfred about his decision in the family’s garden. The camera focuses in as Manfred, unable to control his grief, embraces his father. Kruger’s Rommel “holds the boy [delivering] in a voice near breaking: In the life of a soldier, there’s a very difficult line between military loyalty, carrying out orders no matter what-and criminal stupidity […] Manfred, never be a soldier.”279

The melodramatic style of Rommel’s death in War and Remembrance shows the actual trauma undergone by a family when a loved one commits suicide. In The Desert Fox film representation of Rommel’s death, he and his family were depicted as accepting of his decision and carried a quiet dignity. The more realistic depiction of Rommel’s suicide in the

275 Ibid., 23, Scene 1575.
276 Ibid., 24, Scene 1579.
277 Ibid., 37, Scene 1621.
278 Ibid., 71, Scene 1656.
279 Ibid., 72, Scene 1659.
miniseries makes the consequences real to the audience. By suffering the loss of the characters from the rest of the series, the audience is forced to work through their emotions. The passage of time from WWII shows that Germany was able to come to terms with the trauma of having followed Hitler. The national healing undergone by Germany and the rehabilitation of its military gives hope to the post-Vietnam War United States. The two miniseries show that the United States and Germany can now overcome their own internal divisions and fight their true enemy in the form of the Soviet Union.

During the 1980s, the Cold War was entering its final phase. The costs of maintaining a nuclear arsenal and maneuvering against the United States had taken their toll on the Soviet Union. General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union undertook the policies of Glasnost (Openness) and Perestroika (Restructuring) in order to revitalize the stagnating Soviet economy. However, these policies weakened the Soviet Union through internal strife. In 1989, the Berlin Wall was torn down and Germany began its reunification. This allowed Americans to ponder about a post-Cold War world. The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) television movie The Plot to Kill Hitler (1990) used the July twentieth plot in order to promote the concept of the ‘Good European’ by showing Count von Stauffenberg’s personal trauma as a soldier in the Third Reich. This concept extrapolated the experiences of the ‘Good German’ to all Europeans and helped situate the increasingly democratizing Soviet Union within a post-Cold War framework. The Plot to Kill Hitler was directed by Lawrence Schiller and the script was written by Steven Elkins. The film was shot in the United States and Yugoslavia. Schiller’s production is billed as a historical recreation of the events leading up to the assassination plot, giving it legitimacy. An opening caption clarifies this by declaring “as the end of World War II drew near, Hitler’s Germany was not only waging a war on separate fronts but from within the Third Reich. This story is based on an actual event.”

The authenticity of the statement is reinforced by the use of costumes, props and through language. The actors speak in accented English and in certain cases members of the S.S. and general staff speak in German.

The Plot to Kill Hitler is a biographical film centered on Colonel Stauffenberg’s WWII service. Colonel Stauffenberg’s personal trauma is used to show that the Third Reich

280 The Plot to Kill Hitler, directed by Lawrence Schiller (1990; Warner Home Video, 2009), DVD.
betrayed its soldiers. The film opens with Operation Valkyrie already in progress. Since it is a historical event, the ultimate fate of those involved is already known. The film crew forgoes false suspense in order to focus on character interactions and how they became involved with the coup d’état. The film switches to the past with Stauffenberg, played by actor Brad Davis, meeting Rommel in North Africa. Rommel, played by Helmut Griem, is shown sitting looking at maps in his tent. Behind him, “prominent on the wall […] is a portrait of Adolf Hitler.” The painting illustrates that the fates of both men are tied to Hitler and it shows the oppressive nature of Nazi rule. Rommel’s familiarity with Stauffenberg shows that both men are on even ground in regards to their battlefield experience. Rommel informs Stauffenberg that the Count is being reassigned to Berlin. When Stauffenberg protests the posting, Rommel argues that the war in North Africa is lost. He states that Hitler bungled the war by not sending reinforcements, causing him to “sacrifice German lives. For nothing.” Stauffenberg and Rommel agree that the war is lost and “the two men share a wordless moment as they regard one another, each mindful of a certain tacit allegiance.” After Stauffenberg leaves Rommel’s tent, he is immediately wounded and later appears with “a stump for his right hand, his left hand missing two fingers, and a patch over his left eye.” The injuries give physical form to Hitler’s tyranny over Germany. This scene posits that if Hitler was not stopped, then the German people would continue to suffer.

Stauffenberg overcomes the trauma of serving Hitler’s Germany by making it his duty as a soldier to assassinate the Führer. Stauffenberg returns to his family a broken man. The film depicts Stauffenberg as a soldier without a cause and his feelings of uselessness alienate him from his family. This is similar to the trauma undergone by Vietnam vets

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281 Ibid.
282 The Plot to Kill Hitler Revised Draft, August 27, 1989, David L. Wolper Collection, Box 275, Los Angeles, USC, 4, Scene 10.
283 Ibid., 5, Scene 10.
284 Ibid., 10, Scene 10.
285 Ibid., 10, Scene 10.
286 Ibid., 2, Scene 5.
287 Ibid., 13, Scene 24.
who suffered from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Ruth Leys examines the development of PTSD and survivor guilt as a medical diagnosis in the book *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (2007). She examines two theories, mimetic and anti-mimetic, that were used to analyze PTSD. Mimetic theory argues that the victim imitates destructive behavior and is seen as complacent with the traumatic event. The victim is seen as having been complacent due to enacting their own variances of sadistic behavior. Anti-mimetic theory argues that the victim of abuse acts in a robotic manner by externalizing the trauma, drudging through their everyday lives. These two psychological theories explained how the victims of the Nazi concentration camp system acted in order to cope with their brutal existence and the author uses these to show the evolution of PTSD and survivor guilt as a medical diagnosis. Davis’ Stauffenberg is following the anti-mimetic theory. By externalizing his trauma suffered in North Africa, Stauffenberg is pushing his family away.

Stauffenberg reconnects to his family by joining the anti-Hitler conspiracy. This is due in part to the Holocaust. Stauffenberg meets with the conspirators in his officer’s apartment. Madolyn Smith Osborne’s character, Nina Stauffenberg, visits her husband and confronts him about his involvement with the conspiracy. Davis’ Stauffenberg argues that the plot is justifiable if Germany is to remain a free country, but Nina leaves with her kids to go to her mother’s house. Nina talks with her mother (credited as the Baroness) and says that she is worried about her husband. Nina is convinced to go back to her husband when her mother mentions atrocities against Jews as only rumors. Osborne’s Nina says that “Himmler once said that the Barons are no better than the Jews” and that after the war the Reichsführer would purge the aristocracy. The connection between the aristocracy and the Jews transforms them into ‘Good Germans.’ The escalation of Nazi atrocities spurs the plotters forward in order to end the war. The conspirators are idealistic and their rashness causes their downfall, making it a traumatic experience. Stauffenberg meets with Rommel at an airfield

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289 Ibid., 9.
290 The Plot to Kill Hitler Revised Draft, August 27, 1989, David L. Wolper Collection, Box 275, Los Angeles, USC, 37, Scene 49.
291 Ibid., 57, Scene 61.
and the Field Marshal agrees to join the movement with “some assurances (beat) when the Fuehrer is arrested...he must be brought before a German court and tried for his crimes.”

Stauffenberg and his aide exchange furtive glances in a close up, showing that they are being duplicitous in their actions towards the Field Marshal. The plotters are already planning on having a man named Axel von dem Bussche suicide bomb Hitler, but after the Führer changes his schedule the conspirators are forced to try Operation Valkyrie. Hitler survives the attempt and the inability of the military to secure Berlin leads to the conspiracy’s downfall.

The conspirators are rounded up by the S.S. and put in front of a firing squad. Stauffenberg talks to fellow conspirator General Olbricht while the S.S. officers take aim: “God promised Abraham that he would spare Sodom if ten just men could be found in the city. Maybe he will spare Germany.” Olbricht is not as certain, arguing that “no one will care [or] ever know” about their deaths. The S.S. commander gives orders in German and the film ends with General Fromm forming the Nazi salute and yelling “our Fuehrer Adolf Hitler! Sieg Heil!” The ending of The Plot to Kill Hitler seems nihilistic, but the fact that the anti-Hitler conspiracy’s story is being reenacted shows that their sacrifices are remembered. The story casts ‘Good Germans’ in an upper middleclass light and they are portrayed as devote Christians. Their good military records and opposition to human rights violations provide a method of reconciliation between Germany and the Western World. The trauma of Stauffenberg and his overcoming it to fight injustice show that the post-Vietnam United States can reclaim its history by affirming the sacrifices of its soldiers. This in turn allowed the United States and its Allies to move forward to combat its true enemy, the atheistic Soviet Union. The film posits that oppressive regimes like the Third Reich and Soviet Union can join the international community by following the example of ‘Good

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292 Ibid., 51, Scene 59.
293 Ibid., 46, Scene 56.
294 Ibid., 110, Scene 192.
295 Ibid., 110, Scene 192.
296 Ibid., 110, Scene 192.
Germans.’ By casting aside their totalitarian mantles and embracing American values, these countries can become ‘Good Europeans.’

*The Night of the Fox* (1990) two-part miniseries furthered the concept of the ‘Good European’ by adopting Holocaust imagery. This was in turn directly linked to Rommel’s person. This connection between Rommel and Holocaust imagery in the miniseries reinforces the morality of the German Resistance Movement, as well as underscoring the plight of the *Wehrmacht* soldiers serving under the oppressive Nazi government. By affirming these iconic stereotypes, the television writers for *The Night of the Fox* were able to build a platform for rehabilitating the average soldier for both the West Germans and the United States. This also showed that former Soviets who democratized could now join the Western community. The series was directed by Charles Jarrott and written by Jack Higgins and Bennett Cohen. *The Night of the Fox* is based on the book by Jack Higgins of the same name. Jack Higgins was very involved with the production of the series. Higgins’ contract stipulated that his “approval [was needed] every step of the way-of the script and casting.”

The fictional narrative is set against the real occupation of the Island of Jersey before D-Day. An Allied ship is sunk off of Slapton Sands carrying an engineer with intimate knowledge of the invasion. British professor Harry Martineau, played by George Peppard, must either rescue or eliminate the soldier before the invasion is compromised. At the same time, Rommel begins preparation for the Allied invasion and organizing resistance against Hitler. The British owned Incorporated Television Company (*ITC*) filmed the miniseries on location, working with the governments of the Island of Jersey, France and Yugoslavia. All the characters in the show speak in English, with German characters affecting an accent. The *Wehrmacht* resistance fighters are cast as the Prussian archetype by donning military regalia. These elements harken back to the WWII combat film genre, giving it legitimacy as a historical document.

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298 *The Night of the Fox*, directed by Charles Jarrott (1990; A&E Home Video, 2008), DVD.

299 Ibid.

300 Ibid.
Rommel, played by Michael York, identifies with the Prussian officer stereotype. York’s Rommel is always shown in his uniform and his dialogue with other Wehrmacht officers shows that the military rank-in-file is operating against Hitler. After a party, Rommel and a German officer named Konrad Hofer discuss a failed attempt on Hitler’s life. Hofer says that the conspirators are “as determined as ever [and that] they want to meet” with Rommel in order to plan another attempt.301 York’s Rommel is shown to be crucial to the resistance, but Hitler is suspicious and has him put under surveillance. The Field Marshal enlists an actor from the party to act as a body double, giving Rommel enough time to meet with the resistance. This shows that Rommel is a devious military commander and he could have easily turned that intellect towards supporting the Nazi regime and defeated the Allied Powers.

Rommel’s doppelgänger links the Field Marshal’s person to the trauma of the Holocaust. The double, also played by Michael York, is named Corporal Berger. The Corporal was a veteran of the Eastern Front and North Africa, before being wounded at Tobruk.302 As the faux Rommel tours German fortifications, the command car passes an ominous gate with the words “Arbeit Macht Frei” emblazoned on its crest. The camera zooms in on Berger’s face as he asks “what is this place?”303 He is informed by a Major named Hecker, that it is “a camp for the port workers […] Poles, Russians, [and] Jews” which the army uses as slave labor to build the fortifications.304 Berger looks visibly disturbed. This scene shows that although the German military considers itself divorced from Hitler’s racial policies, the defense of Germany is aiding the atrocities committed by the S.S. Peppard’s Martineau learns of “the Desert Fox’s” visit and decides to assassinate him in order to throw the German forces into chaos before the invasion. Martineau sneaks into the fake Field Marshal’s quarters and confronts Berger. The Corporal pulls off his wig and speaks in Hebrew, revealing that Berger is actually a Jewish man named Heini Baum. The

301 Ibid.
302 Ibid.
303 Ibid.
304 Ibid.
Corporal was an actor who assumed a dead soldier’s identity to escape the S.S.\textsuperscript{305} Baum’s service while masquerading as Berger shows that Germany killed productive members of German society based solely on their religious affiliation and perceived racial differences.

The revelation that Corporal Berger is Jewish ties Rommel to the heroic slave archetype. Annette Insdorf describes Baum’s experiences as Berger as ‘the Jews in Hiding or onstage narrative’ in the Holocaust film genre. She argues that Jews in this Holocaust narrative are confined by claustrophobic conditions that also promote fear.\textsuperscript{306} This is linked with theater allowing Jews to channel their emotions, albeit in a passive way.\textsuperscript{307} Baum is liberated by his experiences in the military, but he is emasculated by it as well. If Baum is discovered, it will result in an instant death sentence. York’s Baum and consequently Rommel are given back their masculinity by allying with Martineau and helping his group escape.\textsuperscript{308}

Baum’s death is depicted in a traumatic fashion in order to provide melodrama to the audience. The emotional turmoil the audience undergoes as a result helps them work through current problems. When the escapees land their plane in England, Baum, still dressed as Rommel, is shot by a British soldier on the runway. Martineau’s superior, a man named Brigadier General Dougal Munro, argues that Berger’s capture could have scared the conspirators off of their plan to kill Hitler.\textsuperscript{309} The bogus Rommel’s demise foreshadows the actual Field Marshal’s forced suicide. This shows that both the United States and Germany at different points in their histories did not take care of their soldiers. This created turmoil in society and the wounds only healed with time. This healing is represented in \textit{The Night of the Fox} through its framing device. Sarah Drayton, a Jersey native who accompanied Martineau on his mission to save the engineer, tells the story to a journalist at the professor’s funeral. Martineau had perished during WWII, but his body was lost and only found forty years

\textsuperscript{305} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{306} Insdorf, 93.
\textsuperscript{307} Ibid., 98.
\textsuperscript{308} \textit{The Night of the Fox}, directed by Charles Jarrott (1990; A&E Home Video, 2008), DVD.
\textsuperscript{309} Ibid.
later.\textsuperscript{310} The passage of time and the continued remembrance of the sacrifices of the soldiers on both sides allow the characters in the series, as well as the audience, to find closure. This provides them with a platform to move forward and combat similar evils to Nazism. By casting aside communism, former Soviets showed that they were committed to combating totalitarian ideals and could join the Western world.

\textit{The Night of the Fox} received mixed reviews due to its tendency for melodramatic flare. John Voorhees of the \textit{Seattle Times} argues that “the plot of “Night of the Fox” […] is tricky enough to hold your interest, but the story is told with some of the worst dialogue any of us has ever suffered.”\textsuperscript{311} Voorhees consents that “the best acting is done by Michael York, who portrays both Rommel and the actor who pretends to be Rommel.”\textsuperscript{312} Irv Leftofsky of the \textit{Los Angeles Times} agrees that “Michael York is the fun of the four hours, finding depth, style, even humor in his Rommel.”\textsuperscript{313} \textit{The Night of the Fox} might not have been a critical success, but its airing shows that people were interested in seeing the Holocaust on television. York’s depiction of Rommel offered a fresh perspective of the Desert Fox and this was due to his character’s connection with Holocaust imagery. The depiction of Rommel and the Jewish soldier by the same actor helped Judaize the Field Marshal, making him more sympathetic to Western audiences.

\textsuperscript{310} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{312} Ibid.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Erwin Rommel’s representation as a military leader and resistance fighter was used by Western filmmakers and television writers in order to reconcile with Germany. During the Cold War, the superpowers could not directly confront each other for fear of starting a nuclear war. Each side courted client states in order to out maneuver the other superpower. Reconciliation between Germany and the Western World was predicated on portraying the Germans as surrogate Americans in order to show that Nazism, and later communism, threatened to take away personal freedoms due to their oppressive nature. Filmmakers achieved this by using precedents set by the combat film genre to craft the resistance narrative. These films were commercially successful at the box office, but there was a backlash from some segments of Western society that viewed the movies as whitewashing Nazi atrocities. After Eichmann’s trial, the Holocaust was catapulted into the forefront of the public consciousness, making it more acceptable to portray Germans in a positive light only if they were not connected with the Final Solution. The desert war narrative allowed filmmakers to illustrate the Wehrmacht as an honorable institution due to the absence of atrocities in North Africa and the fair treatment of POWS. This allowed the Allies to transfer the good reputation of the German military during WWII to its modern counterpart, the Bundeswehr.

By the 1970s, television became more accessible to everyday people. Motion picture companies were initially reluctant to fund television programs, but the ratings success of adapting the British miniseries format to television allowed these companies to pursue their own projects. WWII proved to be popular to television audiences, but the desert war narrative depicted in the earlier Rommel films was viewed as an unrealistic portrayal of war. The Vietnam War exposed internal divisions within the United States and the battlefield experiences of soldiers continued to traumatize them. Audiences wanted a darker, more accurate portrayal of war. Television production companies turned to the Holocaust to bolster the resistance narrative. The Holocaust and the plot to kill Hitler showed that Germany had
experienced its own national trauma. The televised portrayal of Germany’s trauma allowed Western countries to confront their own divisive experiences and reconcile with their former enemy in order to fight the spread of communism. Rommel’s depiction in film and television helped shape audience opinions and win the Cold War. In 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev resigned, signifying the collapse of the Soviet Union and the birth of the Russian Federation. Future films or television programs featuring the Desert Fox will need to redefine the Rommel narratives in order to fit the needs of a modern audience. In 2008, ‘the Rommel Myth’ exhibition opened in Stuttgart, Germany. Among its artifacts, Gestapo documents revealed “that even as [Rommel] was being led away he said to the secret policeman: “I loved the Fuhrer and I love him still. I am innocent of any involvement in the assassination attempt.”” A large portion of the exhibition was also “devoted to the notion that his desert victories may have paved the way for the export of the Holocaust to the Middle East.” These statements helped strip away the romantic connotations that had been cultivated over the past half-century. A more balanced approach to portraying the Desert Fox in future works will help humanize Rommel as a historical figure.

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