

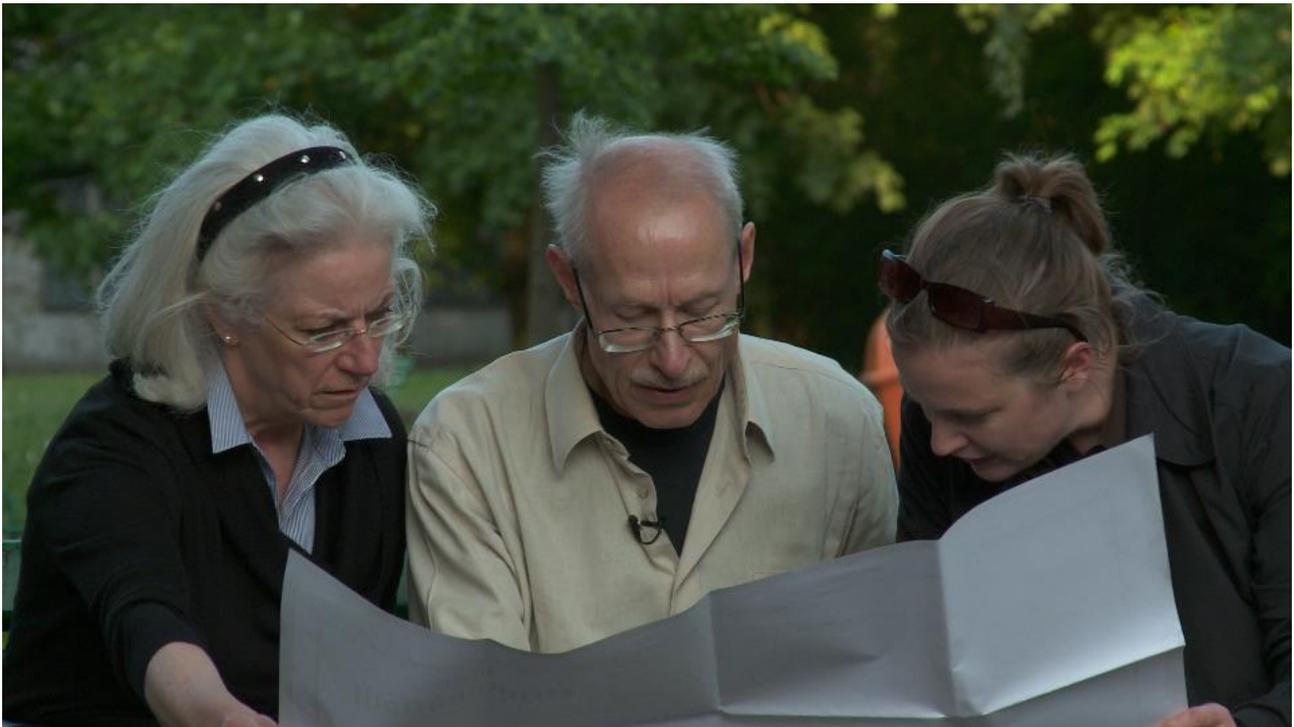


Presents

Line 41

(Linie 41)

A film by Tanja Cummings



**Germany / 2015 / Documentary / German, Polish with English Subtitles
91 min / 1.77: 1 / 5.1 and 2.0**

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Assets:

Official Trailer: TBD

Downloadable hi-res images: <https://goo.gl/2iWgVv>

FULL SYNOPSIS

LINE 41 is a documentary propelled by the charismatic storytelling and reliving of the past by Natan Grossmann, a Holocaust survivor, as he returns to today's Łódź after leaving Poland at the age of 17. Suppressing memories of his captivity for most of his adult life, Grossmann starts a late quest for his missing brother and traces of his parents who perished in the ghetto. During his search he crosses paths with Jens-Jürgen Ventzki, son of the former Nazi Head Mayor of Łódź. Ventzki is pursuing his family's dark secret. In tracing their family histories, they inevitably confront each other.

During World War II, , there was no other city in Europe where Germans, Poles and Jews lived physically so close to each other, yet practically worlds apart. Under German rule, a large ghetto was established within the city — the second largest on occupied Polish soil. Several times a day, the streetcar Line 41 would pass through the ghetto, making the suffering of the imprisoned Jewish people plainly visible to passengers. To the captives in the ghetto, Line 41 was a sign of their own powerlessness and the indifference of those who rode the streetcar everyday: Germans and Poles.

70 years later, Grossmann is immersed in an emotional confrontation with the past. As he gradually uncovers details about his brother's fate, memories of his parents, and life and death in the ghetto return.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

LINE 41 documents a Holocaust survivor's return back to today's Łódź (Poland). Until now, Natan Grossmann had repressed his desire to learn about the fate of his brother he lost contact with in 1942. 70 years later, Grossmann starts a search for his missing brother. His search crosses paths with Jens-Jürgen Ventzki, son of the former Nazi Head Mayor of Lodz. Ventzki is pursuing his family's dark secret. In tracing their family histories, they inevitably confront each other.

LOGLINE

A boundlessly joyful and charismatic Holocaust survivor returns to Poland in a search for answers about his family, crossing paths with the son of Łódź's former Nazi Mayor pursuing his own family's dark secret.

CREW

Director/ Producer	Tanja Cummings
Camera	Marek Iwicki
Editor	Marek Iwicki
Music	Robert Cummings
Sound Editing and Mixing	Jochen Jezussek
Color Grading	Wolfgang Gaube

CAST BIOS

Natan Grossmann (born 1927 in Zgierz close to Łódź) grew up as son of a shoemaker. Along with his parents and older brother he was forced to settle in the "Litzmannstadt" Ghetto (Łódź was renamed "Litzmannstadt" by the Germans during WWII) in 1940. There, Natan worked in one of the forced labor facilities, the "metal resort." His mother Bluma and father Avram died in the ghetto, his brother died in the extermination camp Chelmno/Kulmhof. Natan was deported to Auschwitz/Birkenau just before the liquidation of the ghetto. Upon the end of the war, Natan returned to Łódź, settled in Israel, then in Germany.

Jens-Jürgen Ventzki (born 1944 in Łódź) is the son of the former mayor Werner Ventzki of Łódź. Werner Ventzki was the superior to Hans Biebow, head of the German Ghetto administration ("Deutsche Ghettoverwaltung") in Litzmannstadt/Łódź. After the war, Werner Ventzki was never tried for his role in the Holocaust. Jens-Jürgen Ventzki has spent the last several years grappling with the role of his father in the extermination of Jews and the dark history of his family.

Armin Hornberger (*1930, Łódź – died 2015) has both Polish and German roots from Łódź and the surrounding area. Towards the end of the war, Armin escapes from Łódź towards the West and Germany. Separated from his Polish mother (his German father died in the first days of the war), he returns to his hometown Łódź. A few months later Armin is relocated to Germany, where he lived until his death in 2015.

Helena Bergson (born 1921 in Łódź – died 2013) was forced to move to the Ghetto "Litzmannstadt" where she worked as nurse. She lived in the ghetto right up to its "liquidation". After the war she stayed in Łódź.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In World War II and a few months after being conquered by the German Wehrmacht in September 1939, Łódź was re-named to “Litzmannstadt” and became the center for German extermination policy in Poland. Under German rule, thousands of the local and regional Polish Jews were forced to move to the city’s established ghetto. Although the extermination facilities were initially intended as temporary, they ultimately existed for more than 4 years (until August 1944/January 1945), longer than most other ghettos.

The second largest ghetto in Poland – following one in Warsaw – detained approximately 160,000 Jewish people from Łódź and its surrounding areas. 20,000 Jews from Berlin, Prague, Vienna and other Western cities were also sent to Lodz, as well as 5,000 Sinti and Roma from the Burgenland. In this period, approximately 46,000 people died from hunger, disease and violence in this systematically undersupplied ghetto.

During the ghetto’s existence and up until its liquidation, inhabitants were deported to Auschwitz or to Chełmno/Kulmhof, the latter being a camp designed solely for extermination and death by gassing. By August 1944, only about eight or nine hundred of the original 185,000 were left. They were finally freed by the Soviet army in January 1945.

DIRECTOR’S BIO – Tanja Cummings

Tanja Cummings holds a Master’s Degree in Philosophy from the Free University in Berlin (1998). She has worked as a storyboard artist for feature films and commercials, and as a producer for several documentary films. She has also directed and produced short documentaries and documentation projects, and is the Head Project Manager at the European Association of East-West-Rapprochement (EVA). *LINE 41* is Tanja Cummings’ first feature-length documentary film.

Filmography as producer (selection):

REFLECTION (2010) by Giorgi Mrevlishvili

- Finalist of BERLIN TODAY AWARD 2011 Berlinale

NIEBO NAD LODZIA (2008) by Gosia Kozera-Topinska

ODDZWIEK (2008) by Alina Cyranek, Marc Recchia

FACING ŁÓDŹ (2008) by Paul Hadwiger.

Filmography as producer/director:

LODZER FRAGMENTE, 2008/2009 (short documentary)

LODZERMENSCHEN, 2011/12

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Research for our film began when I learned about this large ghetto that had been set up by the German conquerors for the Jewish population right within this major large Polish city of Lodz during World War II. It had been the second largest ghetto (after the one in Warsaw). It had existed longest, for more than 4 years until August 1944/January 1945. It was — and this touched and moved me strongest — surrounded by a city inhabited by German and Polish citizens. How did this population perceive and deal with the fact of this blatantly public prison?

I felt that in this city of Lodz (then re-named to “Litzmannstadt” by the German conquerors) we could possibly research on the relationship between victims, perpetrators and bystanders — in a way that may not be possible in any other European city.

This ghetto had been isolated from the rest of the city which was now part of the newly created German “Warthegau”. Yet, at the same time the ghetto was an open secret to the non-Jewish people of Lodz. The tram lines running through it gave them opportunity to see it on a daily basis. In this city, these populations lived closest and yet worlds apart. The German conquerors over this time period worked on building a ‘rein deutsche Musterstadt’, a pure, clean German model city. Victims of these politics were not only the Jewish population, but also Poles who were categorized as second-rate humans.

My greatest concern was to find last witnesses of this period, from ‘both sides of the fence’ — people who then were victims of these politics, those who came from the perpetrator side, and those who stood by. Time pressure was immense knowing that many of the witnesses would have reached high age. In the face of this time pressure we started and continued our film work without any film funding.

While we dealt with historical questions I felt they were universal in the sense that under certain constellations what happened then may happen again. Also, while these questions were historical, they were highly emotional and personal at the same time, as we set out on a search for a lost brother.

We wanted to lend a voice to witnesses still alive, and their perspectives could at times only be contrasted with each other. It was in the course of our film work that we decided that some of the witnesses should in fact meet and confront each other. While our aim was to find answers, we kept on raising questions. Most importantly, we wanted to lend a voice to those who perished in the ghetto, lest they are not forgotten. — Tanja Cummings

SELECT FESTIVALS

2015 – Bucharest Jewish Film Festival

2015 – Kassel Documentary Film and Video Festival

2016 – Jewish Film Festival Berlin & Brandenburg

2016 – Jewish International Film Festival - Sydney, Australia



About Film Movement

Celebrating its 15th year, Film Movement is a North American distributor of award-winning independent and foreign films based in New York City. Film Movement has released more than 250 feature films and shorts culled from prestigious film festivals worldwide, and last year it had its first Academy Award-nominated film, Naji Abu Nowar's THEEB. Film Movement's theatrical distribution strategy has evolved to include promising American independent films, documentaries, and an even stronger slate of foreign art house titles. Its catalog includes titles by directors such as Hirokazu Kore-eda, Maren Ade, Jessica Hausner, Andrei Konchalovsky, Andrzej Wajda, Diane Kurys, Ciro Guerra and Melanie Laurent. In 2015, Film Movement launched its reissue label Film Movement Classics, featuring new restorations released theatrically as well as on Blu-ray and DVD, including films by such noted directors as Eric Rohmer, Peter Greenaway, Bille August, Marleen Gorris, Takeshi Kitano, Arturo Ripstein, and Ettore Scola. For more information, please visit www.filmmovement.com