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PRESS CLIPPINGS

2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM

AMERICAN PREMIERE

JANUARY 24, 2007, FILM FORUM, NYC

NEW YORKER

MOVIES

1/29/07

by Richard Brody

2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM

The German filmmaker Malte Ludin's father was Hanns Ludin, a fervent Nazi since the nineteen-twenties and a close associate of Hitler who also served as ambassador to the puppet regime of Slovakia. Malte, the second-youngest of six children, was five years old when his father was executed, in 1947, for war crimes; his film courageously probes the effect of this legacy, and the revelations are shocking. His three surviving sisters find ways to minimize, excuse, and dismiss their father's crimes—one calls the murdered Jews anti-German partisans who were killed in the course of war—though Malte, a dogged researcher, presents them with wartime documents proving that their father oversaw the deportation of Slovakia's Jews despite knowing that they were headed for "physical liquidation." The filmmaker doesn't shrink from debating heatedly with his sisters onscreen or exposing them to their children as liars. His nephew Fabian declares the Third Reich guilty of "probably the most atrocious crimes ever committed in human history"; this film is a valuable attempt to confront their enduring influence. In German and Slovak.—*R.B.* (Film Forum.)

http://www.newyorker.com/goingson/movies/articles/070129gomo_GOAT_movies

The New York Times

MOVIE REVIEW | '2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM'

Our Father, the Nazi Zealot: A Family Grapples With Its Burdens and Blind Spots

By A. O. SCOTT
January 24, 2007

The Nazis ruled Germany for 12 years and inflicted their cruelty on other European nations for around 7. Coming to terms with what Hitler and his followers did has been a much longer project — involving Jews, Germans, other Europeans and just about everyone else in the world — and it is unlikely to end anytime soon. Like many other films and books, “2 or 3 Things I Know About Him,” a new documentary directed by Malte Ludin, examines the impact of Nazism on a single family, in this case the family of a high-ranking member of Hitler’s government. But if it tells, in Mr. Ludin’s words, “a typical German story,” the movie also offers an unusually matter-of-fact picture of the private and public effects of ordinary evil.

The filmmaker’s father, Hanns Ludin, who served as the Third Reich’s ambassador to the Nazi vassal state of Slovakia, and who in that capacity signed deportation orders sending thousands of Jews to Auschwitz, was executed for war crimes in 1947. He left behind a wife, Erla, and six children.

Malte, the youngest (born in 1942), waited until his mother died before embarking on this film, though it includes earlier interviews he did with her. The title, apart from its distracting and irrelevant nod in the direction of Jean-Luc Godard, suggests that Hanns Ludin remains, in his son’s eyes, a mysterious, unknowable figure, and the younger Mr. Ludin’s interviews with other family members contribute to the blurriness of the picture.

Archival photographs and film clips of the father show a stout, smiling fellow, in and out of uniform, and Malte Ludin’s surviving sisters recall him with some fondness. One sister, Barbel, emerges as her father’s staunch defender, and the most wrenching scenes in the film show her and Malte Ludin on screen together, arguing doggedly about the nuances of guilt, responsibility and shame.

Barbel insists that she feels none herself, and furthermore tries to mitigate the portrait of her father as a heartless monster. She resorts to some familiar rationalizations — that he couldn’t have known the full truth about Auschwitz; that he tried to resist or subvert the most inhumane Nazi policies; that many slaughtered by the Nazis should be thought of as casualties of war who got what was coming to them — which all bolster her conviction that Hanns Ludin was, in the end, a victim.

This startling conclusion is not altogether unheard of in postwar Germany. The idea that the German people were the victims of Hitler’s madness rather than its sponsors has proven durable and convenient in that nation’s postwar culture. Mr. Ludin’s anxious, questioning, self-lacerating inquiry represents a powerful countertendency toward full acknowledgment of shared culpability, and his quarrel with Barbel is part of what makes this “a typical German story.”

Barbel's loyalty to her father's memory is both touching and appalling, but her refusal to admit the truth about his actions is something worse. Hanns Ludin joined the SA paramilitary organization in 1931; survived the 1934 Night of the Long Knives, in which Hitler's potential political rivals were massacred; and openly celebrated his Führer's birthday in April 1945, at a time when more than a few die-hard Nazis, glimpsing the Allies' armies over the horizon, underwent an expedient change of heart.



Photographs by the National Center for Jewish Film
Malte Ludin confronts his sister Barbel in his film
"2 or 3 Things I Know About Him."



Photographs by the National Center for Jewish Film
The subject of the film, Hanns Ludin, in 1935.

All the evidence presented in "2 or 3 Things" suggests that Hanns Ludin served the National Socialist cause zealously, and the testimony of survivors — including a member of the Jewish family whose house in Slovakia the Ludins expropriated — leave no doubt regarding his central role in organized mass murder. To call him a victim is to strip all meaning from the word.

What is it like to have such a man as a father or a grandfather? Even those whose parents and grandparents died because of his actions approach this question, in Mr. Ludin's presence, with something resembling pity. And while it is no real comfort, the victims and their descendants are able to regard the past with a moral clarity that eludes Mr. Ludin's siblings.

His wife, Iva Svarcova, also the film's producer, was born in Czechoslovakia in the early 1960s, and the influence of her perspective on 20th-century European history, necessarily distinct from her husband's, is evident through much of the film.

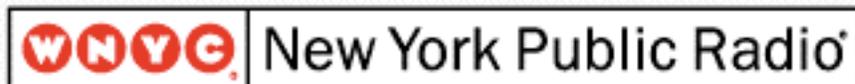
Mr. Ludin's nieces and nephews — Hanns Ludin's grandchildren — were all born after the war, and are the products of a sane, democratic and affluent society (apart from the ones who grew up

in apartheid-era South Africa). They are thus less anguished by the family history, and their sensitive, sensible voices give “2 or 3 Things I Know About Him” a measure of earned and authentic optimism. It is possible for a nation to descend into evil, but over time, recovery is also possible.

2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM

Opens today in Manhattan. Written (in German and Slovak, with English subtitles) and directed by Malte Ludin; director of photography, Franz Lustig; edited by Mr. Ludin and Iva Svarcova; music by Werner Pirchner, Hakim Ludin and Jaroslav Nahovica; produced by Ms. Svarcova; released by the National Center for Jewish Film. Playing with Benjamin Ross’s 18-minute English-language film, “Torte Blume,” at Film Forum, 209 West Houston Street, west of Avenue of the Americas, South Village. Running time: 85 minutes. This film is not rated.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/24/movies/24thin.html?_r=1&ref=movies&oref=slogin



The Leonard Lopate Show

Thursday, January 25, 2007

“Disturbing Facts”



Malte Ludin's "2 or 3 Things I Know About Him"

A Father and a War Criminal

Malte Ludin's father was a Nazi leader who administered the Third Reich's Final Solution in Slovakia. In 1947, he was executed as a war criminal. In his documentary "**2 or 3 Things I Know About Him,**" Malte Ludin attempts to understand who his father was.

TO LISTEN TO THE SHOW:

<http://www.wnyc.org/shows/lopate/episodes/2007/01/25#segment72593>

film

When Dad's a Nazi

Filmmaker struggles to understand his father's horrific past

by **Jim Ridley**

January 23rd, 2007



Hanns Ludin, patriarch

The National Center for Jewish Film

Two or Three Things I Know About Him

Directed by Malte Ludin

January 24 through February 6, Film Forum

Hanns Ludin, as remembered by his children, was a bon vivant and a lover of jokes, good food, and wine. And as Hitler's man in Slovakia during World War II, Ludin gave orders that packed off thousands of Jews to the gas chamber before he was hanged in 1947. A tattered family album of a documentary— assembled by Ludin's youngest child, filmmaker Malte Ludin, with the wary participation of his siblings— *Two or Three Things I Know About Him* can't reconcile Daddy's kind moon face with the Nazi regalia on his collar: His large hands, remembered so fondly by one daughter, signed deportment papers that dispatched other children's daddies to their deaths.

Malte's film tells "a typical German story"—how the surviving Ludins deal with the storm trooper in the closet by denial (the filmmaker's nephew grew up convinced Hanns was some kind of resistance hero), avoidance (one sister testily deflects any talk of her father's guilt), or trampoline leaps of logic (think of the Jews that Daddy *didn't* kill!). Parallels between the whitewashing of personal and national histories are too obvious to state at a time when arguments still rage over how many

Germans actually served as Hitler's willing executioners.

Malte's discomfiting interviews with his siblings, supplemented by surreally matter-of-fact, Zelig-like photos of Hanns in Hitler's company, make for gripping and confrontational viewing. Yet the harder he persists, the less clear it is what he wants from his family. Confession? Renunciation of their father, whose presence the filmmaker was too young to feel as acutely as his siblings did? What keeps this from becoming the ultimate in voyeuristic family strip-mining—*Tarnation* in jackboots—are the scenes in which Malte punctures the self-righteousness of his crusade. Facing a poet who lost his family to Malte's father, the filmmaker instinctively resorts to the same semantic dodges and feeble justifications his siblings make to minimize the old man's culpability. His shame is palpable—as it might be for Americans who grew up sidestepping the question of what their ancestors did back in the days of slavery and Jim Crow.

<http://www.villagevoice.com/film/0704,ridley,75628,20.html>



By Doris Toumarkine
January 26, 2007

2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM

NATIONAL CENTER FOR JEWISH FILM/Color-B&W/1.66//85 Mins./Not Rated

Featuring: Malte Ludin, Iva Svarcova, Erla Ludin, Barbel Ludin.

Credits: Written and directed by Malte Ludin. Produced by Iva Svarcova. Director of photography: Franz Lustig. Edited by Ludin, Svarcova. Music by Werner Pirchner, Hakim Ludin, Jaroslav Nahovica. In German and Slovak with English subtitles.

This exceptional documentary about the surviving members of a prominent family whose paterfamilias was an executed Nazi war criminal is an illumination of convenient rationalization and denial on a grand scale.

Filmmaker Malte Ludin is the youngest surviving son of a family of six whose father was Hanns Ludin, a prominent Nazi whose early dedication to Hitler and whose rise to his position as an ambassador to and governing minister in the Nazi vassal state of Slovakia led to his 1947 execution as a war criminal.

In *2 or 3 Things I Know About Him*, Ludin amasses a wealth of archival footage and documents to tell his famous disgraceful story and weaves this material into interviews with witnesses, who, most disturbingly, include his surviving siblings—all sisters taking relative comfort in various degrees of denial.

Ludin traces his father's early roots as an ardent Nazi in his 20s who became an S.A. leader but managed to escape Hitler's infamous Night of the Long Knives decimation of his S.A. troopers in the early '30s. Ludin *pere* went on to "greatness," becoming Hitler's choice at the outbreak of World War II to oversee Nazi-leaning Slovakia. There, Ludin oversaw such matters as the relocation of the area's Jews to the camps.

Much of the denial and rationalization in the film has to do with how much Ludin *pere* actually knew about the Jews' fate—whether they were being sent to labor facilities or to their death. While Malte Ludin, born in 1942, was too young to know his father well, older sisters were more attached to him and emerge his defenders.

Documents and interviews with some of Slovakia's Jewish survivors make clear that Hanns Ludin was, indeed, a very efficient Nazi. Thanks to commentary from Malte Ludin and his producer wife Iva Svarcova and reactions from the younger generation of Ludins, all of whom are fully aware of the unthinkable sins of the father and the regime he so loyally served, *2 or 3 Things* gives hope. But the film, a must-see for those always eager for more insight into the Nazi era, is also a cautionary tale about the power of denial and of evil that can be practiced by both the banal bureaucrat and the seemingly more refined bourgeois who should know better. Malte Ludin has skillfully combed archives and maneuvered his stern sisters to deliver a complex and hugely personal portrait of an extreme legacy.

http://www.filmjournal.com/filmjournal/reviews/article_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003538290

'Two or Three Things' exposes a family horror

By Jay Carr

January 23, 2007

MOVIE REVIEW

2 or 3 Things I Know About Him

Documentary by Malte Ludin

A family confronts a difficult past

Hanns Ludin signed on early with Hitler. He rose steadily in the Nazi ranks. As Hitler's wartime ambassador to Slovakia, he signed deportation orders sending thousands of Jews to Auschwitz. In 1947, he was hanged as a war criminal. He left a widow and six children.

The youngest, Malte Ludin, now 64, brings more than an up-close and personal perspective to '2 or 3 Things I Know About Him,' his documentary about his family history. Because he's part of the family, he doesn't have to be tactful. And he doesn't let his sisters off the hook when it comes to soft-pedaling their father's guilt.

Hanns may have been a loving father, as Malte's older sisters insist, but Malte doesn't accept their rationalizations that Jews were killed because they were part of armed partisan resistance groups. Nor will he buy the comforting lie that their father was a resistance hero, or that their mother really believed that Auschwitz was a munitions factory. Aided by reams of official paperwork, he makes his sisters face the ugly truth, disputing them on camera. As the agonized and agonizing confrontations proceed, and excuse after excuse is demolished, no Ludin can hide from their bloodstained history.



Malte Ludin faces his family legacy—the fact that his father Hanns Elard Ludin was a prominent Nazi.

Accompanying the lacerating and unsparing '2 or 3 Things' at the Film Forum is Benjamin Ross's 18-minute 'Torte Bluma,' a fictional duet between a death camp SS mucky-muck (Stellan Skarsgaard) and an imprisoned Viennese Jew (Simon McBurney). McBurney's character has his death sentence overturned when he is chosen to serve as a flunky to the SS officer. He likes to think he belongs to a civilized society, even though the world of the camp is so hopelessly perverse and evil.

<http://www.amny.com/entertainment/movies/am-two,0,361217.story>

MOVIE REVIEW

FATHER AS FUHRER FIGURE

By KYLE SMITH

January 24, 2007 -- GERMAN guilt gets a vigorous workout in the penetrating and symbolically important documentary "Two or Three Things I Know About Him," in which a man born in 1942 investigates the secrets of his father's Nazi past.

The father, Hanns Ludin, was a Fuhrer lover who was frequently photographed with his boss. Ludin's son Malte has almost no memory of his father, but interviews with his mother and older sisters slowly tease out the complicated personality of Hanns, who was an early and fanatical standard-bearer for National Socialism.

As a reward for his Nazi service, the senior Ludin was appointed ambassador to Slovakia - where he sent Jews to their deaths. In 1947, he was executed for crimes against humanity. His paper trail survives. That's gruesome history, but what's even more fascinating is the "Capturing the Friedmans" angle of a family arguing over what their father stood for. The family involved is an entire nation. Malte Ludin is a steady guide as he seeks neither to excuse nor to wallow in guilt but simply to face the truth.

His siblings, though, are shockingly reluctant to go even that far. "My father seemed like a hero, a martyr," says Malte's brother. A grandson is under the impression that Hanns Ludin was a "resistance fighter."

Malte's sisters - one of whom, as a toddler, was photographed bestowing flowers on Hitler as though he were Uncle Adolf - become increasingly agitated as Malte gently reminds them of the facts. All of Germany needs to have such a discussion. "I can't say [my father] wasn't a criminal, but for me, he definitely wasn't," says one of Malte's sisters. Asked about shame, she says, "I don't know what that is." As she says this, shame burns across every inch of her face.

TWO OR THREE THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM Patrimony of the Fatherland. *Running time: 85 minutes. Not Rated (disturbing material). At the Film Forum, Houston Street, east of Sixth Avenue.*

http://www.nypost.com/seven/01242007/entertainment/movies/father_as_fuhrer_figure_movies_kyle_smith.htm



Editors' Picks -- *2 or 3 Things I Know About Him*



Movies in Theaters

New Movies This Week



2 or 3 Things I Know About Him ★★★★★

2 Or 3 Things I Know About Him [2005, Movie]

TV Guide Rating: ★★★★★

BY KEN FOX

German filmmaker Malte Ludin's gripping documentary about the father he barely knew is both an extraordinary exercise in family history and an example of what Germans call *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*: "facing the past," particularly the years of Hitler's Third Reich.

Ludin's father was no ordinary German, not even one who fell under Hitler's spell once the Fuhrer seized power. Hanns Elard Ludin was an early and committed Nazi who, after being imprisoned in the 1920s for declaring himself a National Socialist, left the moribund German army for the brown-shirted SA — the thuggish, violent paramilitary wing of Hitler's Nazi party. Ludin's star rose, along with Hitler's, above the ruins of the Weimar Republic; he remained faithful even after Hitler's bloody 1934 purge of the SA leadership and, after commanding some 300,000 storm troopers during the 1930s, became the Reich's ambassador to Slovakia. In 1941, Ludin moved his family to a lovely Bratislava home recently stolen from a Jewish family and embraced a job whose duties included organizing deportation of Slovakian Jews to Auschwitz, Treblinka and other death camps. Protesting his innocence until the end and claiming he was only following orders, Ludin was tried and hanged as a war criminal in 1947. Then only 5 years old, Malte waited until five years after the death of his mother, Erla, to unpack the family trunk filled with his father's newspaper clippings, documents and personal effects and piece together what he calls "a typical German story" (one shudders to think how true this description must be) and a portrait of the father about whom few spoke truthfully.

Malte's film is a bold struggle with the past — he includes footage from two separate interviews with his mother as well as his own uncomfortable meeting with a survivor of his father's crimes — and the silent present, as Malte attempts to engage his three surviving sisters and their families on the subject of Hanns Ludin. Perhaps not

surprisingly, his eldest sister Barbel has both the clearest memories of her "kind" father and is the most defensive about his role in genocide. With the same mix of willful blindness and flat-out denial that allows her to believe two-thirds of German Jews survived the Holocaust, Barbe insists her father couldn't have known the ultimate fate of the Jews, despite documents bearing his signature that clearly indicate the number of Jews marked for "special handling" — Nazi-speak for murder. "Everyone is alone in their view," Malte states as a way of paraphrasing Barbe's attitude toward the father she bitterly defends. But in an era of shifting history and all-too-easily deniable facts, it's incumbent upon great films like Ludin's to share that viewpoint, particularly when all evidence it points to *is* what any reasonable person must regard as the truth.

<http://www.tvguide.com/detail/movie.aspx?tobjectid=285840&more=ucmoviereview>



Film

Time Out New York / Issue 591: January 25–31, 2007

Review

2 or 3 Things I Know About Him

Dir. Malte Ludin. 2005. N/R. 85mins. In German and Slovak, with subtitles.
Documentary.



TEUTONIC PLAGUE Hanns Ludin personifies the banality of evil.

We like our movie Nazis to be cartoon villains, with heavy accents and impenetrable Teutonic veneers. But, as German director Malte Ludin reminds us in his new documentary, even Nazis had loving families back home. Ludin is the son of a staunch SA commander who was tried and executed for war crimes in 1947, when the filmmaker was five. Though Hanns Ludin was responsible, as German ambassador to Slovakia, for the deportation of thousands of Slovakian Jews to concentration camps, his wife (who died in 1997) and three living daughters long maintained fragile states of denial.

Though Ludin does rummage through a few archives, *2 or 3 Things* is no exercise in History Channel lethargy. Interviews with the Ludin siblings have all the queasy circularity of a family feud; the director's older sister Barbel mounts an angry defense, while Ellen betrays her inner turmoil through compulsive nervous tics; Ludin himself, anything but dispassionate, badgers them on camera to accept the truth. (Now playing; [Film Forum](#).)—*Tom Beer*

http://www.timeoutny.com/newyork/Details.do?page=1&xyurl=xy://TONYWebArticles1/591/film/2_or_3_things_i_know_about_him.xml

FILM-FORWARD.COM

By Nora Lee Mandel

2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM Written & Directed by: Malte Ludin. Produced by: Iva Švarcová. Director of Photography: Franz Lustig. Edited by: Ludin & Švarcová. Music: Werner Pirchner, Hakim Ludin & Jaroslav Nahovica. Released by: The National Center for Jewish Film. Language: German with English subtitles. Country of Origin: Germany. 85 mins. Not Rated.

The first memories writer/director Malte Ludin pulls from his sisters in his “typical German story” is how they learned in 1947 that their father had just been executed for war crimes. Playing on Godard’s faux documentary *2 or 3 Things I Know About Her* about a woman’s double life, Malte plumbs the fascinating duality of Hanns Ludin’s life and legacy, as a beloved father and husband still enshrined in family memory versus the loyal Nazi leader.

Malte narrates that, in deference to his mother, he didn’t start this exploration until after she died in 1997 at age 94, though two of his older siblings, who were the most haunted by their revered father, had already passed away. The reluctant, raw family interviews with his surviving three older sisters are so intense that a psychologist attended to counsel them and the crew.

The filmmaker reconstructs his parents’ youth and marriage with reminiscences, letters, photographs, and documents, including his father’s final handwritten plea to the Czechoslovakian court refusing guilt but asking for leniency on behalf of his family. He implies that his father selected his mother for her gracefully athletic Aryan looks and their tow-headed brood looks just like the propaganda images of Goebbels’ cherubic and ideologically pure family.

While the context of his father’s career is confusing to follow without reference to William L. Shirer’s *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, this is an intimate look into how a disgruntled middle-class teenager develops into an agitator for the National Socialists within the German army. In the “Trunk of Sorrows,” as the filmmaker labels the chapter delving into his mother’s souvenirs, is the family scrapbook with photos of Hanns standing close to Hitler at Nazi rallies and audio recordings of his father’s galvanizing speeches as an organizer for the thuggish SA (Sturmabteilung) troops, the notorious Brown Shirts who helped muscle Hitler to power. Malte particularly tries to understand the fanaticism of a father who sees almost 100 of his closest colleagues murdered on “The Night of Long Knives,” the brutal purge of 1934, and still does not question his leader, not then or later. His mother, in a 1987 television interview supplemented with conversations Malte taped the year before her death, still takes considerable pride in having stiffened her husband’s spine to persevere against despair and resentment.

One of the most emotion-packed sequences begins when Malte cajoles his sisters into recalling their charming, playful childhood when their bon vivant father was rewarded with a foreign service position. According to Malte, “The scene of my father’s crimes is where I was born” – the Ambassador’s residence in Bratislava (Pressberg), Slovakia. Intercut is Malte’s interview with the son of the Stern family, who just as vividly remembers being “cleansed” from that house in 1941 and hiding, terrorized, in a cow stall. The communiqués signed by his father, protests registered from Slovaks about atrocities, and most damning and shown in repeated close-up, the orders passed on for escalating deportations for the final liquidation of the Jewish community alternate with his family’s excuses. Malte then has a moving meeting with the poet Tuvia Rübner, whose family was deported to their deaths pursuant to those orders and survived only because his parents sent him alone to Palestine.

The director is understandably gentle in challenging his mother’s wartime justifications, even as he pushes her about his father helping a colleague cover up a murder or the first time she heard of Auschwitz. But he is forcefully incredulous with his sisters’ self-deluding rationalizations, which veer into hero worshipping fantasies that they have passed onto their children. Hanns Ludin’s grandchildren are certainly left with a lot to ponder on camera.

The parallels to the fictional German family in the Israeli film *Walk on Water* are eerie, considering the ironies of who the filmmaker and a granddaughter marry, and we have seen before rationalizing interviews with elderly women Nazi supporters in films such as Hans-Jürgen Syberberg’s *The Confessions of Winifred Wagner*, Ray Müller’s *The Wonderful, Horrible Life Of Leni Riefenstahl*, and André Heller and Othmar Schmiderer’s *Blind Spot: Hitler’s Secretary*. The closest a single family has dealt so immediately with a tainted legacy may be Ross McElwee’s contemplation of his tobacco-growing family in *Bright Leaves* or in the book, *Slaves in the Family*, by Edward Ball. But with this patriarch’s crimes echoing through history, his son’s clear-eyed evisceration of family– and by extension, societal – mythology is unique.

<http://www.film-forward.com/2or3thin.html>

THE NYC MOVIE GURU

2 or 3 Things I Know About Him (Unrated)



Release Date: January 24th, 2007 (Film Forum) by The National Center for Jewish Film.

Directed by Malte Ludin.

In German and Slavik with subtitles.

BASIC PREMISE: A documentary about Hans Ludin, a Nazi supporter executed for war crimes in 1947 and who left behind a widow and 6 children.

ENTERTAINMENT VALUE: This emotionally powerful documentary begins as director Malte Ludin researches the role his father, Hans, played during World War II. Hans gradually rose to power under Hitler's Nazi regime as his storm trooper and, at the age of 28, as a commander of storm troopers. On December 9, 1947, he was executed for these war crimes. He never actually killed anyone, but he sentenced many Jews to be deported, which led to their death. Malte Ludin goes beyond just presenting the historical facts about his father. The rest of the film doesn't provide new revelations about Hans, but rather about how his remaining family has coped with the harsh duality that he was both a father and a war criminal concurrently. Erika, his eldest sibling, seems to have bottled up her feelings the most because, when interviewed, she hesitates often and even shows anger. It's fascinating to watch how everyone else reacts differently. Although, admittedly, it would have been helpful to include a bit more closure and synthesis, it could take many more years of reflection to reach any real closure to this very personal, touchy and complex subject matter.

SPIRITUAL VALUE: By asking questions which have not been asked to his family members for 60 years, director Malte Ludin opens the floodgates of emotions. For many, especially his sister Erika, it's a bit overwhelming and uncomfortable to be confronted with sensitive questions regarding Hans. It feels quite moving to watch them reflect and face the harsh truth and bring out their innate feelings which has been neglected and ignored for too long. Ultimately, Malte has managed to tear off a Band Aide from an old wound, so-to-speak, and to let the wound breathe for a change. Hopefully, it'll heal on its own while exposed for all to see through this revealing documentary.

INSULT TO YOUR INTELLIGENCE: None.

NUMBER OF TIMES I CHECKED MY WATCH: 0

IN A NUTSHELL: Emotionally powerful, revealing and bold.

RECOMMENDED WAY TO WATCH: Movie Theater

<http://www.nycmovieguru.com/2or3things.html>

◀THE L MAGAZINE▶

Film

2 or 3 Things I Know About Him

Directed by Malte Ludin

By Jason Bogdaneris



The spate of Nazi-themed films both fictional and documentary seems to have become a tidal wave of late. Difficult to assess critically because of the impossibility of separating intent from results — who's going to savage even a really bad anti-fascist film after all, except perhaps the outer fringes of the web where eczema-moraled National Front wannabe bloggers reside?— opinion is often guarded. The reason for this torrent of films, many homegrown, that deal with many aspects of the German trauma seems to be generational. Some 60 years after the end of the Third Reich, Germans, who after the war retreated into a default stunned neutrality, have given way to the offspring of both perpetrators and victims who approach the subject matter with a more detached perspective than its direct participants.

The questions of the subsequent generation are at the heart of Malte Ludin's film about his father, a man whose existence had always seemed little more than a shadow. Despite the fact his father was tried and executed in 1947 for his crimes as a member of the SS, Ludin had always lived with the comforting fiction that Ludin Sr., officially a functionary in Slovakia during the war, was a well-meaning man caught in the vortex of history, weak perhaps, but not evil. By poring over documents and interviewing witnesses, a portrait of his father emerges as a man who did his work willingly, even eagerly. Ludin takes his discovery to his two older sisters and confronts them, eventually challenging them to defend their ambivalence in the face of evidence. An older interview given by his late mother, during which she wrestles with these questions, becomes a dialogue that has familial and, of course, national implications. While it can descend occasionally into a pettiness that diminishes its intentions (Holocaust debate as sibling rivalry?), Ludin has succeeded in transforming his remarkable, if not unique, perspective into an act of cinematic empathy. Opens January 24 at Film Forum

<http://www.thelmagazine.com/5/1/Film/film7.cfm?ctype=2>



My Dad, The War Criminal

In 'Two or Three Things I Know About Him,' Malte Ludin explores his father's role in the Holocaust — and the family's denial.

George Robinson - Special To The Jewish Week 1/19/07

Hanns Ludin isn't much more than a footnote in the histories of the Shoah. He is mentioned only once in William Shirer's "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich," in connection with his being thrown out of the Wehrmacht for supporting Hitler in 1930; twice in Hans Hohné's history of the SS for his ability to survive as an SA [another branch of the secret police] officer after the "Night of the Long Knives"; and eight times in Raul Hilberg's definitive "The Destruction of European Jewry," mainly in connection with his performance as the German ambassador to the Slovakian puppet government of the viciously anti-Semitic Father Joseph Tiso. But he was important enough for the Czechs to have tried, and they found him guilty of war crimes for which he was hanged in 1947.

Ludin may be a comparatively minor Nazi functionary, albeit a doggedly loyal one, but for director Malte Ludin, one of his six children, he is both a nettlesome and sinister spectral presence and, inevitably, the subject of a film, "Two or Three Things I Know About Him," which opens Jan. 24. Ludin opens the film with a blunt statement: "This is the story of my father, a war criminal; my mother; my brother and sisters; my nieces and nephews. A typical German story."

What makes the story typical in Ludin's mind, one suspects, is the wide range of attitudes the family members took subsequent to Hanns Ludin's execution. Malte, who was born in 1942 and barely knew his father, is forthright in his condemnation of the Nazi to whom his blood ties seem almost incidental. Two of the three surviving older sisters all seem pretty convinced that their father was railroaded to the gallows, but the strength of their denial occasionally wavers and, in one case, seems to be built on shifting sands. By contrast, the several nieces and nephews who are interviewed have no doubt of the elder Ludin's guilt or the justice of his punishment.

Before his execution, Ludin wrote a letter in which he said, "I committed no crimes," but his son makes it clear from interviews with Jewish survivors that that statement could only be justified in the most literal sense that Ludin didn't personally load Jews into the gas chambers at Auschwitz. One of the film's most telling moments occurs when the director cross-cuts between his sisters' idyllic recollections of their childhood and the nightmarish tale told by a survivor of his life as a "hidden child."

Ludin's structuring of "Two or Three Things" is cunning. We are told the outcome of his father's trial almost immediately after that opening statement by the filmmaker, with the result that even the most benign of the sisters' memories seem tainted by the shadows of the death camps. The film seems at times to be meandering, only to suddenly fetch up the most conclusive indictments of the staunch SA man. Indeed, as my colleague Ira Hozinsky noted, the occasionally desultory nature of the film's narrative actually serves to underline the obsessive nature of Malte Ludin's quest for his father's true self; no matter where the film digresses, it always comes back to the Shoah like a sudden blow to the head.

"Two or Three Things I Know About Him" is frequently a queasy viewing experience. Clips of a 1978 interview with the filmmaker's mother make it abundantly clear that she was, if anything, even more cannily political than her husband and in deeper denial than any of the children. Watching Malte nearly come to blows with his sister Barbel, the most unrepentant supporter of their father, is deeply disturbing. But this film isn't about a "typical German story" of inter- and intra-generational friction. By the very nature of the family in question, "Two or Three Things" resonates more powerfully than your average slice-of-life documentary.

<http://www.thejewishweek.com/news/newscontent.php3?artid=13556>



FEATURED REVIEW

2 or 3 Things I Know About Him

by *Steve Erickson*

A German documentarian finds Nazi skeletons in the closet.

The Nerve Film Lounge

THE NERVE REVIEW

2 or 3 Things I Know About Him

Directed by: Malte Ludin

Runtime: 85 min. **Rated:** Not Rated

Release date: January 24, 2007

In the past few years, a number of films have served as arrows of Oedipal rage from sons to their fathers, whether fiction (Noah Baumbach's *The Squid and the Whale*) or documentary (Mark Wexler's *Tell Them Who You Are*). While German director Malte Ludin's *2 or 3 Things I Know About Him* falls into this category, its stakes are much higher. His father Hanns wasn't a garden-variety jerk, but a Nazi officer who presided over the murder of Slovak Jews. Since Hanns was executed in 1947, when Malte was five, Malte never really knew him.

The heart of *2 or 3 Things I Know About Him* lies in a lengthy argument between Ludin and one of his sisters. She won't acknowledge the enormity of the Holocaust, preferring to use words like "deportation." He insists on facing the truth. While Ludin's clearly on the side of the angels, there's an unpleasant self-righteous streak to his statements, especially with the camera's power serving his side of the debate. That said, he later implicates himself in his family's rhetoric of denial. Ludin uses this argument with his sister as counterpoint in an intricately woven fabric of testimony. Even at its best, his film evokes the staged catharsis of American daytime talk shows, but he makes gripping cinema out of his family's inability to take responsibility for the past. The Ludins' confusion testifies to a whole nation's lapses of courage and memory. — *Steve Erickson*

<http://www.nervepop.com/filmounge/review/2or3thingsiknowaboutim/index.aspx>



JANUARY 25, 2007

By Karen Wilson

Gothamist Pick: The lingering legacy of the Nazi regime is something Germans still struggle with. Film Forum will be screening two very powerful films, a fictional short and a documentary, starting this week about the Holocaust. German documentarian Malte Ludin examines his family's relationship to the Nazis and his father's role in the war in *Two or Three Things I Know About Him*. Born at the tale end of the war in Slovakia where his father was stationed as the Nazi ambassador in the occupied country, Ludin interviews a number of his siblings, digs into official records and stares at photos of his Dad posed next to Hitler in an attempt to understand how much his father knew about the real consequences of his actions in Bratislava. Well-directed and unflinching, this documentary examines the Holocaust from the unusual position of the children of the perpetrators.

Gothamist.com: http://www.gothamist.com/archives/2007/01/25/the_cinecultist_50.php

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REICH AND WRONG

By Jack Mathews

2 OR 3 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT HIM



Documentary in which a filmmaker tries to make sense of his father's Nazi past. At Film Forum (1:25). Not rated: Mature themes. In German and Slovak, with subtitles.

As a boy, Malte Ludin looked up to his deceased father as a martyr. In middle age, he began to agree with nearly everyone else that his dad, hanged Nazi war criminal Hanns Ludin, was a monster.

In this painfully sincere documentary, Ludin examines his father's Nazi past and concludes that, as ambassador to Slovakia, he knowingly ordered the roundup of Jews to the death camps. What troubles the filmmaker most now is why a couple of his living siblings still defend their father.

Some of this is elemental psychology; blood is thicker than water, etc. But the movie also reveals how the privileged class ignored, condoned or denied the reality of the Holocaust.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/movies/moviereviews/story/491887p-414337c.html>

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Reviewed by **Noel Murray**

January 25th, 2007

2 Or 3 Things I Know About Him

Director: Malte Ludin

Documentary

In German & Slovak w/ subtitles

Rated: Not Rated, 85 minutes



It's easy to dismiss Malte Ludin's documentary *2 Or 3 Things I Know About Him* as the worst kind of apologia for wretched behavior, or maybe a feature-length attempt to say "the Nazis loved their children too." But in exploring his father's stint as a Nazi commander—which ended in execution in 1947—Ludin is less interested in defending daddy's choices than in examining how his family has dealt with the disconnect between the sweet-natured man they knew at home and the piles of documents that show the hand he played in executing Slovakian Jews. Ludin admits that he hopes to find a document that will prove his father had no direct knowledge of Hitler's "final solution," or that Dad was secretly a resistance fighter, but mostly, he's resigned himself to the facts, and now ponders whether a stain on one man's life spreads to everyone he knew.

Most of Ludin's family has come to grips with their legacy too, and at least one, a South African niece, is more fretful over her connection to apartheid. But Ludin's sister Barbel stubbornly insists, "It's my right to see my father the way I want to see him," and the two of them go around and around about whether they can plausibly believe that Hans Ludin didn't know what was happening on his watch. (Barbel thinks that "the kinds of Jews" who couldn't afford to buy their way out of the camps were lower-class, and therefore easier for everyday Germans to overlook.) And when Ludin goes to meet the families of some Holocaust victims, he winds up channeling his sister, making excuses.

Aesthetically, *2 Or 3 Things I Know About Him* is slick and straightforward, with a few snazzy visual effects (like the intertitles that pop up between sections) and a few overtly symbolic moments (like Ludin's telling visit to the optometrist). The most daring thing about the movie is arguably its title, which rips off Jean-Luc Godard for no obvious reason.

Even though *2 Or 3 Things'* central irony is blunt, Ludin's tone remains measured throughout, and never self-serving. He acknowledges the contradiction in his family's decision to honor their father by admiring his conviction, and he lets Barbel express her opinion: "I still think he was better than I am, and better than you."

<http://www.avclub.com/content/node/57888>