

THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA
Friday Film Fest Series

Join us for our next Friday Film Night:

Friday, November 21 at 6.30pm

500 Jahre Bauernkrieg (1525)

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September 5

English/ German with English Subtitles

Oct 10 | 6.30pm

Film, Food & Discussion

The German Society of Pennsylvania

611 Spring Garden St.

Philadelphia, PA 19123

Since 1972, the cost of security at the Olympic Games has become astronomical.

September 5 (2024)

Director: Tim Fehlbaum

Script: Moritz Binder
Tim Fehlbaum
Alex David

Production: Philipp Trauer,
Thomas Wöbke,
Tim Fehlbaum,
Sean Penn,
John Ira Palmer
John Wildermuth

Camera: Markus Förderer

Music: Lorenz Dangel

Editor: Hansjörg Weißbrich

Cast: Peter Sarsgaard as Boone Arledge
John Magaro as Geoffrey Mason
Ben Chaplin as Marvin Bader
Leonie Benesch as Marianne Gebhardt
Benjamin Walker as Peter Jennings



Commentary by: Karl Möhlmann

hand including bulletin boards with photos of the victims. Most of the footage is inside the studio and is dimly lit and packed with bulky cameras, thick cables, small old style monitors and rotary dial phones.

Yet, despite this stationary setting, the tension inside matches the drama outside. From the moment shots can be heard from within the Olympic village and it becomes clear what has happened, the organization and the steps taken to turn this into a live and gripping story accelerate. So does the intensity and the physical reaction of the entire crew, who increasingly seem to run on steady drips of adrenaline.

It might be a blessing that there are no actual close-up videos of the events that unfolded on the Fürstenfeldbruck airport. While gun fire and explosions can be heard and seen from outside the fenced-in airfield, there are rumors that the hostages were free which was apparently confirmed by the German television station ZDF and by a fax from the German Chancellor. While Marvin Bader asks Mason to hold off on reporting this, he is eager to claim the scoop and has it announced. As we soon learn that all the hostages were murdered, the first live coverage of a hostage crisis and subsequent massacre has made a major mistake.

It wouldn't be the last time for this to happen during live broadcasting. Racing to be the first in the business of sensational, breaking news reporting carries the inherent risk of premature facts or fake news.

The games went on but the ancient ideal of peace and a cessation of hostilities during the Olympic Games had suffered a debilitating collision with the harsh realities of the modern era.

München 1972 – Die heiteren Spiele

After hosting its first Olympic Games 1936 in Berlin under Nazi Rule, West Germany was eager to present a different image when it was awarded the games in Munich from August 26 until September 11, 1972. The official motto was *“Die heiteren Spiele”*, being

cheerful, open, modern and democratic just like the republic. The architecture of the Olympic Park and the design of the different stadia (Olympic Stadium, Swimming Hall and Olympic Hall) was revolutionary with sweeping canopies of acryl-



ic glass stabilized by metal ropes. This style had never been used before on this scale and was intended to project a sense of joy, fun and optimism. In contrast to Berlin 1936 and also to Mexico City in 1968 where the Mexican military was a conspicuous presence throughout the games, Munich organizers spent less than \$ 2 million on security. The security personnel were to be unarmed, inconspicuous, cheerful and helpful. The security arrangements at the Olympic village were lax with unauthorized visitors gaining access with relative ease. For more than a week the Games unfolded without incident. A cheerful Olympics on German soil seemed to be a complete success.

September 5 – Tag des Terrors

“Die heiteren Spiele” came to a screeching halt when eight members of the Palestinian Black September militant organization entered the Olympic village before dawn on September 5, broke into the Israeli apartment and took 11 athletes, coaches and officials hostage. Two members of the Israeli team who resisted were killed immediately, while the terrorists bargained for the release of 200 Palestinian prisoners in Israel in exchange for the remaining nine Israelis. Demanding a plane to go to an undetermined Arab country, the terrorists and their nine hostages were transferred by helicopter to the military airport of Fürstenfeldbruck near Munich. The German authorities had no intention of granting their demands and had planned an ambush at the airport late in the evening of September



5.

Their rescue attempt failed miserably when all of the Israeli hostages were killed by their

captors after the shooting started. They detonated a bomb inside one helicopter and killed the other remaining hostages with a machine gun. Five of the eight terrorists and a West German policeman were killed as well. The three other terrorists were arrested and imprisoned pending trial but released by the West German government on October 29, 1972 in exchange for the hijacked Lufthansa flight 615. Two of those released terrorists were later hunted down and assassinated by the Mossad. The third surviving terrorist is living in hiding in North Africa.

Initially the games had been suspended, but after the incident was

over, Avery Brundage, the president of the International Olympic Committee, declared that “the games must go on”. After a memorial service in the Olympic stadium the competition resumed.

Live Coverage

While Steven Spielberg’s 2005 movie *Munich* was based on the book *Vengeance* by George Jonas and follows the Mossad assassinations of the freed terrorists following the Munich massacre, this film focuses on ABC Sport’s live TV coverage of the event. As stated in the epilogue, this was the first time a terrorist attack had been broadcast on live television and was viewed by close to 900 million people, making it one of the most viewed broadcasts in history. As Roone Arledge (Peter Sarsgaard), the president of ABC Sports, commented: “more people watched their coverage than the moment Neil Armstrong stepped out on the moon”.

As this drama unfolds, Arledge puts an untested sports producer, Geoff Mason (John Magaro), in charge of covering this unprecedented event while succeeding in holding off a takeover by the political crew of ABC in New York. Live coverage in 1972 in the pre-digital



era bears no comparison to today. It involved heavy-duty television cameras wheeled outside, dressing up as a US athlete to gain access to the Olympic village with a forged ID, transporting film canisters taped to the body past the police check points and creating visuals by