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Chin up, John!

Chin up, John! is a Nazi German feature film directed by Viktor de Kowa that premiered on March 11, 1941 at the Tauentzienpalast in Berlin . It is the third and last directorial work by the actor de Kowa. The short film *Jugend* flew, produced by Ufa together with the National Socialist Air Corps , was shown in the opening act .

After the Second World War , the propaganda film *Head Up, Johannes!* in Germany by the Allies on the list of films not approved for public showing . To this day, the film belongs to the group of reserved films and is therefore only accessible in closed events.

Table of Contents

Plot

emergence

ensorship

reception and criticism

See also

itemizations

literature

web links

Storyline

Redel's German family has been living separately for ten years. The mother with her son Johannes as a German living abroad in Argentina , the father as a manor owner near Berlin. Johannes, who everyone calls Juan in his new home, grows up wealthy in his mother's easy-going lifestyle. After her sudden death, the aunt Julieta Merck fulfills her sister's last wish and brings the now 15-year-

Movie

original title	Chin up, John!
production	<u>Germany</u>
country	
original language	<u>German</u>
Publishing year	<u>1941</u>
length	78 minutes
age rating	<u>FSK no (reservation film)</u>
	<u>Rod</u>
directing	<u>Victor de Kova</u>
script	<u>Toni Huppertz</u> <u>Wilhelm Krug</u> <u>Felix von Eckardt</u> ^[1]
production	<u>Conrad Flocker</u>
music	<u>Harald Boehmelt</u>
camera	<u>Friedl Behn-Grund</u>
cut	<u>Lena Neumann</u>
	occupation

- Klaus Detlef Sierck : Johannes von Redel
- Albrecht Schoenhals : father of Redel
- Dorothea Wieck : Julieta Merck
- Otto Fee : Servant Perlow
- Gunnar Moeller : Wilhelm Panse
- Karl Dannemann : Father Rumen
- Renée Stobrawa : mother rumen
- Karl Heidmann : country postman
- Eduard von Winterstein : inspector
- Leo Peukert : Don Pedro
- Jürgen Jacob : Room elder Karl Vorwerk
- Hans Zesch-Ballot : head of the institution

old boy back to his father in Germany. Johannes again has difficulties with the strictness of his embittered father, which had also led to the separation of his parents, and rejects the new environment. He asks his aunt, who is helping Johannes' father to settle in, to return to Argentina together. His negative attitude reaches its climax after a fight with the children from the area, in which a mountain of straw in a field catches fire. The neighbor boy Wilhelm Panse wanted revenge for being a target for a Slingshot had to serve, but after a short discussion with his father, Johannes accepts the blame in the hope of being sent back to Argentina. However, Wilhelm explains to his father that same evening that he and the other boys only wanted to scare Johannes with a firecracker and the straw accidentally caught fire.

- Volker von Collande : Zugfuhrer Dr. Angerman
- Rudolf Vones : Zugfuhrer Kröger
- Franz Weber : Institution Secretary
- Karl Fochler : prison doctor
- Gabriele Hoffmann : Nurse

Father Panse reports this from Redel and says that as a punishment his son Wilhelm is not allowed to go to the National Political Educational Institute (NPEA) in Oranienstein . He encourages von Redel to send Johannes there instead.

But there are also integration difficulties in the NPEA. Johannes has no contact with his comrades and educators; he is threatened with expulsion. First the train driver Dr. Angermann discovers his passion for music and believes in it, Johannes over time the value system of the new Nazi Germany to bring closer. First of all, he is supposed to lead the music band, which initially sparks a new argument with his comrades, since he ousts the unmusical room elder Vorwerk from his position as bandmaster. But his self-composed march convinces everyone involved and becomes the anthem of the institution. During a visit from his aunt Julieta and his Argentine guardian Don Pedro, who wants to persuade him to come back to Argentina, Johannes rejects this suggestion. Slowly, Johannes gets to know the meaning of real youth camaraderie, which culminates in him and the room eldest calling each other “du” in the shower and Karl offering the soap to Johannes.

Wilhelm Panse is now also allowed to visit the National Political Educational Institute. During a test of courage in which one is supposed to jump off the diving board into the water, Wilhelm pulls back. Johannes, who is observing the scene, explains to the driver that Wilhelm had to watch his older brother drown in the village pond. Encouraged by his previous successes in the NPEA, Johannes wants to surprise the head of the institution and teach Wilhelm how to swim, although he has been expressly forbidden from going into the water because of his trauma. The exercise in the water gets out of control and Wilhelm has to go to the hospital because of the hallucinations caused by the shock. Johannes' renewed lack of discipline forces the head of the institution to consider whether he should be expelled from the institution. Eventually, however, John is forgiven because you can tell he has a bad conscience. His comrades line up in the garden of the institution in such a way that they form the sentence “HEAD UP/ JOHANNES/ !” for him.

During the institution's summer maneuvers , Johannes proves himself as a military tactician. A knife is presented to him as a commendation and he is allowed to say the vow.

During the holidays, Johannes and his father finally find each other, who was saved from his bitterness at Julieta's side.

Genesis

Filming began on June 10, 1940 in the Tobis studio in Berlin-Johannisthal . Exterior shots followed on the former manor (today Kartzow Castle) in Kartzow to the west of Berlin , in the Oranienstein Educational Institution (today Oranienstein Castle) in Diez an der Lahn , which opened in 1934, in Arnstein Monastery and in Runkel Castle . ^[2] ^[3] On November 16, 1940, work on the film was completed. ^[4] The film's production costs were 747,000 Reichsmarks; already at the end of 1941 "the film had brought in 1,344,000 Reichsmarks". ^[2]

Censorship

The production of the film was closely monitored personally by the Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (RMVP) and specifically by Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels . This attention was based, among other things, on the fact that the genre of political youth films in Germany had essentially been idle since 1933/34 (*Hitlerjunge Quex* ; *Die Bande vom Hoheneck* ; *Ich für dich – Du für mich*). Director de Kowa was correspondingly euphoric:

"The task of creating an image of the life of this young generation, of this future leadership of Greater Germany - that is a job that one can be enthusiastic about honestly and without reservations. ^[5] ”

However, Goebbels was not completely enthusiastic about an early edited version (diary entry from August 12, 1940: *"Too loud and not very skilful in directing, but good in subject matter"* ^[6]). The criticism becomes clearer in the diary entry of November 25, 1940: *"A Napola film Head Up, Johannes!" Really bad and completely failed under the direction of de Kowa. It will hardly be possible to save it.*" ^[6] Rescue attempts were made anyway; Scenes had to be removed, others reshot.

Above all, the excessively pronounced propagandistic aspects of the film were disturbing: Goebbels preferred subliminal propaganda in feature films. In addition, the film focuses on play, physical training and character development in the depiction of the NPEA, while the nature of the institution as an elite school (outstanding academic performance was already a prerequisite for admission) is hardly recognizable. Even in the finished cut version, the actual school learning in the classroom hardly occurs. An originally existing scene, in which Johannes' bad grades are even explicitly mentioned, was cut out.

On February 5, 1941, the film was submitted to the Berlin Film Inspection Office under inspection number 54995. ^[2] In view of the massive internal criticism, it was not surprising that *Cheer up, Johannes!* only got the title "Jugendfrei".

In the three years that followed, a handful of other films were made that dealt with the theme of *Kopf hoch, Johannes!* (an independent, freedom-loving boy is converted to discipline and obedience in a Nazi youth organization). As can be seen from the ratings, three films that were made based on books by Alfred Weidenmann or under Weidenmann's direction enjoyed the highest esteem : *Jakko* (1941, "Staatspolitisch und volkstümlich Wert", "Jugendwert"), *hands up!* (1942, "state politically and artistically valuable", "youth value") and *young eagles* (1944, also "state politically and artistically valuable", "youth value").

Reception and criticism

The RMVP issued the instruction to report on the film "neither in words nor in pictures" up to a week before the premiere and "objectively and not too extensively" after this embargo. In addition, official support for the filming was not allowed to be mentioned. ^[7]

Overall, the film was rated mostly positively in the press that was brought into line:

“In the title role, Claus Detlef Sierck gives a sample of his idiosyncratic skills. Excellent is the boy, Gunar Möller, a splendid fellow. [...] This film successfully tries to convey an excerpt from that new form of education that was realized in the National Political Educational Institutions.”

– BERLINER VOLKS-ZEITUNG , MARCH 12, 1941 ^[2]

"The film breathes "presence and freshness" and is "designed to make everyone's heart beat faster.""

– THE MOVIE, MARCH 15, 1941 ^[2]

"The plot of this film is so simple, plausible and humanly moving that every viewer should be touched. [...] If it is the purpose of such a film to show that the selected German youth is to be educated in these educational institutions and accordingly also the intention to describe the manner of this education and intelligent, systematic development, so it is with the authors like the game master Viktor de Kowa succeeded."

– THE FILM WORLD, MARCH 21, 1941 ^[2]

See also

- List of German feature films premiered in the German Reich during the Nazi era

Itemizations

1. Adenauer 's government spokesman in West Germany, is often cited as the film's screenwriter in the literature, the opening credits only mention Huppertz and Krug.
2. Barbara Stelzner-Large: *The joy of youth? Studies on propagandistic youth films in the Third Reich* . VDG, Weimar 1996, ISBN 3-932124-02-2 .
3. Federal Archives/Culture Office of the City of Koblenz (ed.): Exhibition on the film series "Youth in the NS State", Koblenz 1978, p. 24.
4. Gustav Hummelsbeck: *Cheer up, Johannes*. "Current Film Books" Volume 125, Verlag Karl Curtius, Berlin 1941
5. Tobis press kit on the film; quoted from: Bogusław Drewniak: *The German Film 1938-1945. A general overview* . Droste, Düsseldorf 1987, ISBN 3-7700-0731-X , p. 588.
6. Elke Fröhlich (ed.): *The diaries of Joseph Goebbels*. Records 1923–1941. Part 1, Volume 8. KG Saur, Munich, New York 1998, p. 267.
7. Bianca Dustdar: *Film as a propaganda tool in the youth policy of the Third Reich*. Coppi-Verlag, Alfeld 1996, ISBN 3-930258-31-5 , p. 101.

Literature

- Friedrich Koch : *school in the cinema. authority and education. From the "Blue Angel" to the "Feuerzangenbowle"* . Beltz, Weinheim / Basel 1987, ISBN 978-3-407-34009-2 , pp. 113-119: "A German boy is put on the right path."

Web Links

- *Chin up, John!* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0159516/>)in theInternet Movie Database
 - *Chin up, John!* (<https://www.filmportal.de/94d44c9651e440608635259ccdf64602>)at [filmportal.de](https://www.filmportal.de)
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