



im Tal der Ahnungslosen

A documentary by Florian Kunert

Shadowed by weekly, racist demonstrations in East Germany former factory workers of the German Democratic Republic together with Syrian refugees share the memories of their lost homelands.

World Premiere

Berlinale 2019

Section: Forum

Germany 2019, 67 min, german / arabic with engl. ST, color, Dolby 5.1.

www.fortschritt-film.com



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CREW

Director	Florian Kunert
Writer	Florian Kunert
Dramaturgy	Herbert Schwarze
Cinematography	Joanna Piechotta
Editor	Ian Purnell
	Florian Kunert
Sound Design	Stefan Voglsinger
Music	Stefan Galler
	Franziska Henke
Sound	Christian Bläsche
	Stefan Voglsinger
Producers	Stefan Gieren
	Sarah Schreier
	Florian Kunert
	KHM

A production of **StoryBay UG**

in Co-Production with **Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln**

& Florian Kunert

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Synopsis

Neustadt, Saxony. 30 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain the legacy of the German Democratic Republic is at stake in the ruins of the 'Progress' factory.

Once producing harvester machinery the factory grounds lately housed asylum seekers who are confronted by weekly racist demonstrations in East Germany.

Former factory workers of 'Progress' help Syrian refugees with their German Integration Course. What starts with a German language lesson in the 'Progress' ruin ends with classes of political education and a GDR military camp. Making the social conditioning of the GDR everyday life apparent.

A joint viewing of archive material re-establishes the socialist friendship between the GDR and Syria. The countries which shared comradeship in former times when "Progress" delivered agricultural machinery to Syria.

The 'Progress' ruin becomes a symbol of the lost homeland. The attempt of a convergence, a socialist utopia.





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Director's Note

Since October 2014 thousands of people under the name of 'Patriotic Europeans Against The Islamization of the West' (PEGIDA) have gathered in the streets of Dresden to rally against the German immigration policies of welcoming asylum seekers to Germany. Why is the anti-immigration movement so much bigger and more violent in East Germany than in the rest of the country?

I started to research this question through the filter of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and became interested in the psychological meaning of the revolution of 1989. For many, personal identity had been shattered by the loss of national identity. But passively participating in the peaceful revolution didn't necessarily result in an inner transformation or an understanding of how an individual may have been directly a victim of the GDR regime. Having grown up as child of parents who lived in the GDR, I wanted to explore the deep complexities and contradictions of this possible loss. I focus on the 'valley of the people who don't know': a region in East Germany that didn't receive TV signal from the west and therefor did not have an alternative source of information to the GDR propaganda. This area is now the heart of the PEGIDA anti-immigration movement.

How can you find a visual language to make the subtle trauma of the GDR everyday-life visible? The experimental nature of the re-enactments in this film helps to disrupt the dominant, often nostalgic narrative of the personal history and to give space for an instinctual choice of words to talk about personal memories. The Syrian asylum seekers who feature in the film play an important role in finding a new angle on the GDR history, bringing their own contemporary political context to the exploration.



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Born in 1989 I didn't experience the GDR directly but am questioning; am I still a part of its collective memory? In the GDR archive material I find missing images for these fragmented memories. The film takes these images of memory physically into the former factory building 'Progress' which closed down in the 1990s and has been used as a home for asylum seekers. Placing historical meaning within the walls of the building and watching the slow demolition of the space is also ritualistic and allows engagement with GDR history retrospectively. 'Progress' becomes a space in which to question the legacy of the GDR and its possible repercussions today.

Bio- /Filmography

Florian Kunert (*1989) is a German writer and director. His short documentary film ‚Oh Brother Octopus‘ premiered in the Berlinale Shorts Program in 2017 before winning the German Short Film Prize. As part of making the film, Florian Kunert lived in Indonesia for one year. He studied documentary direction at La Escuela Internacional de Cine y TV in Cuba and has recently completed a post-graduate at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne. ‚Progress‘ is his first feature film project.

Progress in the valley of the people who don't know

2019, feature documentary, 67min, Germany

Oh Brother Octopus

2017, documentary short, 27min, Indonesia

The Production Company

The StoryBay and producer Stefan Gieren prepare the stage for young international auteur filmmakers. In mostly international coproductions, the company successfully produces films with partners in India, China, Lebanon, Chile, Poland and Turkey. More than 80 international awards – among them an Oscar nomination and two Student Academy Awards – stand testimony for the quality of the films.

Contact Production

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Photos

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