

THE GERMAN SOCIETY'S

Friday Film Fest Series



Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei (The Edukators)

Credits:

Director: Hans Weingartner
Screenplay: Katharina Held
Photography: Daniela Knapp, Matthias Schellenberg
Producer: Hans Weingartner
Production Co: SWR, Arte
Production year: 2004
Cast: Daniel Brühl, Stipe Erceg, Julia Jentsch,
and Burghart Klaußner
Language: German with English subtitles

Summary prepared by Ed Cohen

Rarely are German film makers invited to premiere their work at the Cannes Film Festival – especially ones shot in grainy video, with little attention to scenic design, much improvisation, and an incomprehensible ending (mercifully omitted from the English-subtitled release). This one was so honored, probably because it says something significant about holding onto leftist ideals, despite *die Wende* and the demise of the Soviet empire. Like “Good-Bye Lenin!” this film is regarded as a milestone along the way of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.

Jan (Daniel Brühl) and Peter (Stipe Erceg) are roommates in Berlin. By night, they break into the villas of the wealthy. They steal nothing, do minimal property damage, but make a bizarre political statement with the way they rearrange their victims’ belongings. On the walls they write, “*Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei,*” or “*Sie haben zu viel Geld.*” They sign themselves, “*Die Erziehungsberechtigten.*” (The faux-German word, “Edukators,” invented for the English-subtitled release, never occurs in the film).

Peter’s girlfriend, Jule (Julia Jentsch), works doggedly as a waitress to pay off her €100,000 debt to the wealthy executive, Hardenberg (Burghart Klaußner). Driving uninsured, she had rear-ended his enormous Mercedes. When forced to give up her apartment, Jule moves in with Peter and Jan. They become a triangle. Jan and Jule go to Hardenberg’s villa, to give it the *Erziehungsberechtigten* treatment. Jule loses her *Handy*. They go back to retrieve it – and find Hardenberg at home...

For its first third, “The Edukators” seems to revive French “New Wave.” In its middle, it proceeds like a crime caper. The third act, set in the Tyrolean Alps, oddly resembles a *Heimatfilm* from the fifties. Again and again, with deliciously surprising results, it breaks out of the conventions it had appeared to be following.

We have seen Daniel Brühl and Burghart Klauer before, in “Good-Bye Lenin!” (Klaußner was the absent father in the

West). Julia Jentsch is a highly regarded *Münchener* stage actress, who subsequently played the title role in "*Sophie Scholl - Die letzten Tage*." Without her remarkable, understated performance, this strange hodge-podge of a film, "The Edukators," might well have fallen flat.

The English-subtitled DVD we will view contains the film only, with no "extras." We will also view two "teases" and selected deleted scenes, from the German "deluxe edition" DVD.