

THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF
PENNSYLVANIA
Friday Film Fest Series



Trautmann

Directed by Marcus H. Rosenmüller

November 20, 2020

• 6:30 PM •

Film, Food & Discussion

The German Society of Pennsylvania

611 Spring Garden St.

Philadelphia, PA 19123

Support provided in part by the
Philadelphia Cultural Fund.



Trautmann (2019)

Director: Marcus H. Rosenmüller
Screenplay: Marcus H. Rosenmüller
Nicholas J. Schofield
Production: Chris Curling
Robert Marciniak
Music: Gerd Baumann
Camera: Daniel Gottschalk
Editor: Alexander Berner
Length: 116 Minutes
Cast: **David Kross** as Bert Trautmann
Freya Mavor as Margret
John Henshaw as Jack Friar
Harry Melling as Sergeant Smythe
Michael Socha as Bill Twist
Commentary: Karl Moehlmann



Bert Trautmann

Bernhard Carl “Bert” Trautmann was born on October 22, 1923 to a working class family in Bremen. He received the Iron Cross of the German Wehrmacht during the Second World War after he had fought on the Eastern Front for three years. In 2004, he became an honorary Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his role in promoting better Anglo-German relations. He was thus the only person ever to receive both an Iron Cross and an OBE.

Given the high level of animosity and, on occasion, even hatred that existed between Germany and England since World War One, achieving such recognition required a series of improbable events and circumstances. These included difficult personal decisions, a set of remarkable soccer skills, luck and a unique occasion in which he was able to capture the hearts of the British people with his bravery.

Trautmann was transferred to France to help defend against the expected Allied invasion in Normandy. He was subsequently captured in Kleve, Germany (in the vicinity of Bremen) by British troops as the war drew to a close in the spring of 1945. First imprisoned near Ostend in Belgium, he was moved to two different prisoner-of-war

camps in England before finally being sent to POW Camp 50 in Ashton-in-Makerfield in Lancashire in the Northwest of England where he stayed until 1948.

After first being classified as a class “C” prisoner (a Nazi), he was later upgraded to a class “B” prisoner and offered the chance of being repatriated to Germany after his release from camp in 1948. But he declined this offer and decided to stay in England. According to this well researched movie, he had promised Jack Friar, the manager of the local soccer team in Lancashire for which he had been recruited, that he would play the final relegation match at the end of the season. He would honor this promise although it came one week after his release from camp and his chance to return to Bremen.

The movie also suggests that his romantic interest in the daughter of the team manager, Margret Friar, played a role in his decision. He had been working at the Friar grocery during the day when he started to play goalie for the local team while still in the camp. Gradually, the resentment of Margret towards Bert as a German POW subsided and she fell in love with him. She had begun to see Bert in a different light after he had intimated to her that for young men like him in Germany, there was no other choice than being a soldier during the war.

Whether it was his soccer playing or the emerging relationship to Margret whom he married in 1950, the decision to stay in England set him on a unique trajectory. His path in life would ultimately make him an indispensable intercultural ambassador and fulfill his destiny as a bridge between the two former enemies.

The “Kraut” Keeper

Trautmann’s career as a goalie started when his Prisoner Camp 50 team played a friendly match against the local amateur team. Getting injured playing half back, he switched places with the goalie Gunther Luhr, a position that would propel him to the highest level of English soccer.

After his release from camp in 1948, he joined the local team of St. Helens



Town. His outstanding play helped the team be promoted into Division Two of the Lancashire Combination League. With this success came an increase in attendance and Trautmann's growing reputation as an extraordinary goalkeeper.

Soon a number of First Division teams showed interest in him. The first offer came from Manchester City and on October 7, 1949 Trautmann signed a contract with the club and turned professional. Many City fans were not happy about signing a "*Fallschirmjäger*" of the *Luftwaffe*. The club was bombarded with protest letters from people in Manchester and around the country, and some season ticket holders even threatened a boycott. But when the team captain Eric Westwood, himself a Normandy veteran, declared his support for Trautmann ("There is no war in this dressing room") and Bert had a great first match against Bolton Wanderers on November 19, 1949, the outrage slowly died down, at least for the home crowd.

That was not the case in other parts of the country and especially in London, which had suffered the brunt of Hitler's V-2 bomb attacks. Loud calls of "Kraut", "Nazi" and boos were heard when ManCity visited Fulham, the oldest football club in London, in January 1950. But when Trautmann held the heavily favored Fulham team to a one goal score, he received a standing ovation from the home crowd and applause from players of both teams. This match was a turning point in the acceptance of Trautmann by a skeptical public and media. As a "soccer country", the English appreciated hard work and talent, and in the case of Trautmann, it was a quintessential case of the English sense of fair play and good competition.

Glück im Unglück

The 1955-56 season was the most memorable for ManCity and for Trautmann. The club finished fourth in the league and reached the coveted FA Cup Final in 1956 for the second year in a row, this time against Birmingham City. Trautmann had just won the **Footballer of the Year Award**, the first goalkeeper to ever achieve this. Two days later, in May 1956, he entered renowned Wembley Stadium for a match that would make him a hero and gain him worldwide fame.

Leading by a score of 3-1 in the second half, Trautmann dove for a ball and collided with Birmingham's Peter Murphy whose knee hit him in the neck. Trautmann was slow to get up and seemed dazed

and dizzy but decided to play on for the remaining 15 minutes, making several crucial saves to hold on to the victory. In this photo he is seen holding his neck as he leaves the pitch. After several days of neck pain and headaches, an X-Ray finally revealed that his neck was broken.



This could have been a life-threatening injury, but the third vertebra had wedged against the second preventing further damage. Even though he had to sit out for almost six months to heal his injury, this *Glück im Unglück* moment helped Trautmann to extend his playing years at ManCity until 1964. This serendipitous prolongation of his career secured his legacy as one of the best goalkeepers ever.

His years as a player set the stage for his coaching career in England (Stockport County), and Germany (Preußen Münster, Opel Rüsselsheim). He also was active in several countries around the world (Myanmar, Tanzania, Liberia, Pakistan and North Yemen) as ambassador and development coach for the German Football Association.

Unglück

David Kross as Bert Trautmann and Freya Mavor as Margret Friar are excellent choices for the leading roles in this movie. Kross who had starred in "*The Reader*" together with Kate Winslet 11 years ago gives a strong performance. It is especially remarkable how he masters Trautmann's unique diving style and his innovative use of a goalkeeper's *Abwurf* that lends this movie such an authentic touch.

Freya Mavor is a Scottish actress who plays Margret Friar. The two develop a wonderful chemistry that convincingly propels their characters from utter resentment to a deep love that culminates in marriage. Trautmann had three children with Margret and was married to her for 22 years from 1950 until 1972. Tragedy hit the family

when their firstborn son, John, was killed in a car accident at age 5 in 1956, only months after Trautmann had suffered his broken neck in the FA Cup final.



Trautmann blamed himself for the accident and felt he was somehow being punished by fate since he had witnessed a little boy being killed during the war by a fellow German soldier without interfering or preventing it. Despite her own near unbearable grief Margret found the strength to urge Bert to overcome this haunting memory and look to the future. They subsequently had two more sons, but the cumulative stress over the years led to the deterioration of their relationship and final divorce in 1972. Margret died in 1980. Trautmann was married two more times and lived with his third wife Marlis in Spain near Valencia where he died on July 19, 2013 at the age of 89.

German Society Calendar of Events

December

- Wed. Dec. 9 Konversationsabend Weihnachtsfeier, 6:00pm
- Sat. Dec. 12 Buchclub Meeting, 1:30pm
- Sun. Dec. 13 Wister & More: Musica Capricciosa, 3:00pm

January

- Sun. Jan. 3 Wister & More: Xiaopei Xu, 3:00pm
- Sat. Jan. 9 Buchclub Meeting, 1:30pm
- Fri. Jan. 15 Friday Film Fest: *Der Fall Collini*, 6:30 pm
- Sun. Jan. 31 Wister & More: EStrella Piano Duo, 3:00pm

February

- Wed. Feb. 10 Konversationsabend, 6:00pm
- Sat. Feb. 13 Buchclub Meeting, 1:30pm
- Friday 19 Friday Film Fest: *Atlas*, 6:30 pm

March

- Fri. Mar. 19 Friday Film Fest: *Die Getriebenen*, 6:30pm
- Sun. Mar. 21 Wister & More: Duo Parisienne, 3:00pm