

Date: Fri, 20 Feb 2004 08:02:02 -0000
From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>

HEIMAT Part 8. DER AMERIKANER [1945-1947]

This episode is something of a loose, baggy monster gathering up innumerable threads and strands of the narrative and shaking them about. It is very concerned with arrivals, departures, arrivals and departures, and reunions, both successful and unsuccessful.

We have the following final departures to the next life, that is to say, death. Mathias has died before the episode opens on 23/1/1945, as his tombstone indicates. Robert is presumed dead by his wife, Pauline. We witness the deaths of Martina and Rudolf Pollack [at last we learn his first name] in the shattered remnants of Berlin just before its final fall. Kath dies just as Paul is about to return to America. We have two arrivals and departures. Paul arrives from America and returns eventually, and poor, old Pieritz arrives from the Eastern Zone and departs on his bicycle, after being asked to leave by Maria. The following arrive; Anton walks home from Turkey; Klarchen arrives out of nowhere and Ernst is in the vicinity with a new lady, Frigga, in tow. Paul has successful reunions with his brother and sister, Eduard and Pauline, and his mother, Kath. Ernst refuses to acknowledge his father when he could have done [we shall return to this later], and his wife, Maria, sees through him and in many ways remains distant and cool, if not contemptuous. Martina and Rudolf are reunited in death.

The episode begins with a kind of prologue. We have a vision of Hell as Berlin suffers its final onslaught. Herr Pollack, I must call him that, is lying dying on the floor of a shattered building. He has sent for Martina who arrives through the smoke and flames. She can do nothing for him. He does not even feel her warm breast. She tries to keep him awake and conscious by pretending to be a radio announcer and even imitating Hitler's voice in a very convincing way. She sits at a piano and plays an Ilse Lerner song about flowers and the Spring as the bombs rain down. He finally expires. He has never spoken but I thought I noticed a slight flicker of a smile cross his face at one point during Martina's antics. Reinder remembers this scene very well! It is dramatic and tragic. Martina is instantly shot as she emerges into the street by unidentified troops. I heard a shout. Were they German or Russian, not that it matters?

Despite some of the above I thought I would focus on some of the characters as a way into the episode. I must issue a word of warning to myself here. As the film has progressed many of the characters of Heimat have become just as "real" as real people. That is one of the delights of such a film. But we must not forget they are "constructs", played by actors, even if maybe based on people Edgar Reitz has known. One may remember the furore over "Who shot JR?" in the soap Dallas. Of course, in reality, no one shot JR. The actor went home for his tea. I know this is elementary, but it is Reitz's skill as a director which can make us believe totally in his people and their actions. However, the unsophisticated response is very widespread. For instance, all over the UK in the summer one can see fetes and bazaars and charity shows opened by characters from soaps such as East Enders and The Archers. Not such and such an actor but such and such a character as if he/she really existed. I will write of the Heimat people as if they were real even when I know they are not.

The arrival of Paul in Schabbach with his big, black car and black chauffeur is very striking. He wears a kind of Stetson hat and strides, self-assured, into the village. On the soundtrack his theme music thumps away. I was reminded of many an American Western, such as High Noon or Gunfight at OK Corral. I am sure this was deliberate. He sees himself as the saviour of the people in their time of hardship. He throws a party for the village with a military band playing tunes a la Glen Miller. He makes a pompous and vainglorious speech. When they are dancing Maria who sees through him says: "You like this, don't you Paul? A homecoming after 20 years paying everything with dollars. A

pretty daughter-in-law. A car with a chauffeur. And everybody applauding." That night he goes to Maria's room but is rebuffed. She thrusts a blanket into his hand to prevent him climbing into her bed. Maria speaks with real vehemence and her face is set: "20 years, Paul. You can't just dispel them by being cold." She stares at him with contempt and the scene breaks.

The scene in the kitchen before the party repays study. The characters are carefully grouped. We have been waiting and waiting to see how the first meeting between Paul and Maria will go. Maria slips silently into the room and stares at him. He is on the other side of the room surrounded by women and children. He is discomfited and doffs his hat but says nothing to the wife he betrayed. Lucie babbles incessantly and all we want is for her to shut up so that the two can encounter each other. It is noticeable he does not speak to her but asks after Eduard. The scene in the graveyard continues the theme of two strangers. Maria puts the question to him: "Why did you leave us, Paul?" It is what we want to know too. He has no answer. Maria is totally dismissive, isn't she? "Forget it, Paul." She rejects his offer of help and does so again as he leaves, saying coldly: "Don't say things like that." She reminds him that he left secretly before and that now he is leaving properly.

Should Maria have the last word? Paul is able to relax with his brother, Eduard, and can confide in him. He says, "Maria's become like a stranger to me." He does have some insight into himself. There is a moment of great honesty when very slowly and deliberately he tells Eduard, while they are sitting at the bar in Wiesbaden, that "Life in America is even now a fight for life." Ernst is in the bar with his new lady, Frigga. He sees and recognises his father and his uncle but is determined to ignore them. There is a nice moment, as Ernst pays his bill at the bar, when Paul turns and looks directly at his son but there is no hint of recognition. It is through Paul that Reitz can say something about homeland and memories of the past.

His mother talks to him about a time when he was ill as a little boy and supplies details he never knew. He remembers buying radio parts in Boppard and going on to Koblenz, now in ruins. His life-story is piecing together. It also seems to me that there is a new hardness in Maria's character brought on by her life experiences. I was quite shocked in a way at her asking Pieritz to leave. She is under great pressure, and, presumably he reminds her all the time of her beloved Otto. I remembered the scene when Pieritz brings Otto back to the farmhouse after his accident and goes to his lonely room. We saw him looking at photographs of his wife and now we learn all his family are dead. I noticed that Maria seems to have little time for her father. She ignores him when he is having his nationalist outburst. She is very suspicious of Klarchen, isn't she? She speaks quite directly and doesn't mince her words. So perhaps as a witness to Paul's character she is not one hundred per cent reliable.

One scene that I found quite notable was the scene in the old railway station where Ernst is in hiding after being shot down and parachuting from his plane. The attention to detail is enormous. There was a swallow flitting through the hole in the circular window; the camera focused on the wooden floorboards in the sunlight, on the mug and bowl on the little table, on socks, lavatory paper, a bolt in the bed-head and so on. We could feel the particularity of the room. Then, in an audacious move, Reitz moves completely away from "naturalism", and introduces an allegorical figure, in the shape of a uniformed airman, who, standing in the sunlight, announces: "Heil Hitler, I'm homesickness." He describes in a haunting voice and with no little poetry Ernst's escape. He tells him that he hung by his parachute ropes from a French fir tree "amid the smell of blood and resin." There is a contrast between this uniformed figure, now on a bench next to Ernst, and the white - bandaged escaped airman. He then mysteriously leaves. Allegory and naturalism in one strange, memorable scene.

I felt that the human dimension was stronger in this episode than the political, but we are kept up to date with the different zones of occupation [French roadblock, Pieritz from the E-Zone, night club in American zone and so on]. We see the hardships suffered by the

German people post-war, the Americanisation of everything, the adulation of some [Lucie], the hostility of others [Alois Wiegand]; we learn that Wilfried is in prison, that refugees from the towns are selling all their possessions and so on. We do have a report on the state of the nation as a backdrop.

Finally, I would just like to report that at the end of the episode I found myself with tears rolling down my face and I didn't know why. On second viewing I realised I was responding to man's initiative and inventiveness in the face of whatever fate throws at him. Anton has walked over 5,000 kilometres and on the day of his arrival he is planning the establishment of an optics factory in the clear Hunsruck air. Hope springs eternal in the human breast! And the very last shot carried another theme. Anton and Martha walk down the wet road, past the same telegraph poles that Hans shot at, etcetera, etcetera. The music thumps and the credits roll. Thus, does Reitz emphasise the continuity of past and present and future in a life story.

Ivan Mansley.

P.S. 1. When Ernst tells Frigga not to look at the two men at the bar he says that one of them's an uncle. How does Frigga know that his uncle is the thin one, as she asks who the fatter one is?

2. Why has Ernst sent Klarchen to his home in Schabbach? He denies this to Frigga, of course. What are his motives? They are unclear to me.

3. I didn't much like the stylised scenes showing the stages of Anton's walk. They seemed out of place. We have two arrivals and departures. Paul arrives from America and returns eventually and poor, old Pieritz arrives from the Eastern Zone

Date: Sat, 21 Feb 2004 13:11:22 -0600
From: "Susan Biedron" <susan jsbiedron.com>

Ivan and all,

I have only re-watched part of "8" DER AMERIKANER, but thought I would comment on that to get the conversation started. Ivan, as you wrote, there is much happening in this segment to advance the plot.

>The episode begins with a kind of prologue. We have a vision of Hell as
> Berlin suffers its final onslaught. Herr Pollack, I must call him that, is
> lying dying on the floor of a shattered building. He has sent for Martina
> who arrives through the smoke and flames. She can do nothing for him.

.....
> Martina is instantly shot as she emerges into the street by unidentified
> troops. I heard a shout. Were they German or Russian, not that it matters?

I wondered about which side the soldiers were on too - but Martina is wearing some kind of helmet so perhaps even if they were German they shot at anything that moved and looked like a soldier. Is Martina some kind of airraid warden or is she wearing the helmet for protection? Last year I read Anthony Beever's "The Fall of Berlin" so seeing this segment now has more meaning. My aunt (80's) had a close friend who had immigrated from Berlin - she survived by disguising herself as a boy. Better for Martina that she was shot.

> The arrival of Paul in Schabbach with his big, black car and black
> chauffeur is very striking. He wears a kind of Stetson hat and

> strides, self-assured, into the village. <<

I wondered about the hat - Paul has been living in Detroit, not Texas. It also looks as if his coat or jacket has a bit of a western cut. Did Reitz have Paul dressed this way to make him look like a cowboy? Paul gets out of the car to walk into his village - he did walk away from it, but even so, one is struck by the difference in his return.

> The scene in the kitchen before the party repays study. The characters are
> carefully grouped. We have been waiting and waiting to see how the first
> meeting between Paul and Maria will go. Maria slips silently into the room
> and stares at him. He is on the other side of the room surrounded by women
> and children. He is discomfited and doffs his hat but says nothing to the
> wife he betrayed. Lucie babbles incessantly and all we want is for her to
> shut up so that the two can encounter each other.<<

Yes, I noticed the groups - Pauline and Lottie are close to Maria, supporting her. Maria is quite sharp with Lottie, but I think she is disturbed (naturally so) that everyone is flocking around Paul like a hero. Just at this time Klarchen appears - 2 dubious characters arrive about the same time. I, too was waiting for Lucie to shut up - but this is just like real life - you want to talk to someone important and an annoying person is taking up your time.

Yet later after Maria has sent Lottie and Anton's wife off to settle her in, Maria joins them to look at Klarchen's photo album. From Klarchen's story (and I had not noticed this in previous viewings) I get the distinct impression that she never had a relationship with Ernst, but overheard him on the train and needed a place to stay. Ernst does not appear in any of the photos - "he is behind the wheelbarrow" or some such excuse. Since Klarchen apparently had a camera to record recent events, she would certainly have a photo of Ernst if he were really her fiance/boyfriend. Yet Lottie and Martha seem immediately taken with Klarchen.

> Why has Ernst sent Klarchen to his home in Schabbach? He denies
> this to Frigga, of course. What are his motives? They are unclear to me.

Ivan, I wonder myself - did Ernst really send her? The first time I saw this part, I thought Klarchen was the daughter at the French railroad station. But that was a different girl - wasn't it?? Ernst is a bit of a mystery - so different than the Ernst who flew over the village to drop roses.

Comments on Lottie: She doesn't look too much like the young thinner Lottie who was in love with Specht. I am also a little surprised that Maria and Pauline accept Lottie's methods to get coffee from the Yanks. Marie Goot makes a comment on Lottie's behavior, but Maria seems happy at the prospect of real coffee.

Comments on Hermann, particularly the scene where he and his mother, etc., walk by the abandoned military vehicle: What a little brat! He must really be spoiled by Maria. He doesn't listen to his mother at all. Not too typical for that time for a child in a German family.

More comments later, after I watch the rest of Part 8.

Susan

Date: Tue, 24 Feb 2004 15:53:59 -0000
From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>

You wrote: " I wondered about the hat - Paul has been living in Detroit, not Texas. It also looks as if his coat or jacket has a bit of a western cut. Did Reitz have Paul dressed this way to make him look like a cowboy? Paul gets out of the car to walk into his village - he did walk away from it, but even so, one is struck by the difference in his return."

It seemed to me that Reitz was saying here is the individualist, capitalist, robber baron almost [like a cowboy] as opposed to the more communal values, perhaps, of Schabbach. Paul had also walked into his village before, hadn't he? At the end of the 1914-18 war, in very different circumstances!

Concerning Klarchen you wrote: "Yet later after Maria has sent Lottie and Anton's wife off to settle her in, Maria joins them to look at Klarchen's photo album. From Klarchen's story (and I had not noticed this in previous viewings) I get the distinct impression that she never had a relationship with Ernst, but overheard him on the train and needed a place to stay. Ernst does not appear in any of the photos - "he is behind the wheelbarrow" or some such excuse. Since Klarchen apparently had a camera to record recent events, she would certainly have a photo of Ernst if he were really her fiance/boyfriend. Yet Lottie and Martha seem immediately taken with Klarchen."

I also felt that Klarchen might be an opportunist and had not been sent by Ernst at all. Lotti and Martha seem taken with her, as you say, but Lotti asks, "Did Ernst really send you here?" Maria is quite sharp when she reminds Klarchen that she is being looked after, before going upstairs and retiring to her room where, anguished and distressed, she leans back against the door. I noticed that excuses were made about the absence of any photo of Ernst also.

You also wrote: "Ivan, I wonder myself - did Ernst really send her? The first time I saw this part, I thought Klarchen was the daughter at the French railroad station. But that was a different girl - wasn't it?? Ernst is a bit of a mystery - so different than the Ernst who flew over the village to drop roses."

Great minds think alike!! That was my feeling at first; that Klarchen was the daughter at the French railway station. But no! They are different young women, as you say. What intrigues me tho' is Ernst's reply to Frigga when she asks him whether he has a woman waiting at home for him. He replies: "I don't think so." [that is the English sub-title]. That reply is somewhat ambiguous. If he had not he would just have denied it completely saying something like, "No, don't be so ridiculous" or words to that effect, wouldn't he? What does the German soundtrack say?

Concerning Hermann you wrote: "Comments on Hermann, particularly the scene where he and his mother, etc., walk by the abandoned military vehicle: What a little brat! He must really be spoiled by Maria. He doesn't listen to his mother at all. Not too typical for that time for a child in a German family."

So our first impression of Hermann is that he is a mischievous and somewhat rebellious little boy who does not take much notice of his mother. Very important for later developments!! I noticed he has no fear of asking for sweets and chocolate from Paul and others. I didn't really understand why it was so important to him that it was a German finger he had obtained from the burnt-out vehicle as opposed to any finger!

I look forward to reading your further thoughts on Part 8 when you have completed your viewing, Susan.

Maarten had commented on Part 7, after spotting many interesting dualities, "why did Maria ask Otto to bed so many times? Does it mean anything? Does she want to save him from the cold/death?"

On one level, at any rate, I took it that Maria was anxious for full sexual intimacy, a

moment of fleeting happiness, which was difficult if he wouldn't get into bed!!

Ivan Mansley.

Date: Wed, 25 Feb 2004 13:26:55 +0100
From: Jack.Woollven telekurs.com

Ivan wrote:

> What intrigues me tho' is Ernst's reply to Frigga when
> she asks him whether he has a woman waiting at home for him. He replies:
> "I don't think so." [that is the English sub-title]. That reply is somewhat
> ambiguous. If he had not he would just have denied it completely saying
> something like, "No, don't be so ridiculous" or words to that effect,
> wouldn't he? What does the German soundtrack say?

I checked in the script on the erfilm.de site and the lines are:

Frigga: Oder wartet da eine Frau auf dich?

Ernst: Ich glaub nicht.

Now, "glauben" can mean "believe", but also "think" or "suppose" (equivalent to German "meinen" or "annehmen"). If we translate Ernst's line as "I don't suppose so", then I think it probably makes sense, in that he had given Klaerchen the address but probably doesn't really expect that she would make her way there and that he would see her again.

Jack Woollven

Date: Wed, 25 Feb 2004 11:41:31 -0600
From: "Susan Biedron" <susan jsbiedron.com>

Ivan, Jack & all,

I finished watching Part 8. I agree with Jack's comment on Ernst's "Ich glaube nicht." I guess we will really never know for sure if Ernst gave Klarchen the address or not. It does mystify me as to why he would give his address to any woman since he is not interested at all in settling down with anyone in particular.

ERNST:

We learn early in Part 8 that there has been a rift between Maria and Ernst. This probably stems from her sending Otto away, the only father figure Ernst could remember. Previously Ernst did not want to live at home anymore after Maria sent Otto away. He was sent off at a young age to join the glider corps (I don't remember the exact term). His comrades and fellow pilots, his commanding officer became his family at a crucial point in his life, which is why I believe he tries to hold on to his former Luftwaffe connection.

The scene with in the attic of the railroad station with the wounded Ernst and the "Homesickness" figure didn't do much for me. It reminds me a little of the scene when Paul returns from the war and sees the figure of his former friend. Somehow, the scene with Ernst is not as effective as that in Part 1 with Paul. I suppose Reitz is trying to show that Ernst subconsciously thinks of his Heimat but outwardly stays away from home.

PAUL:

In spite of the fact that Paul is now a rich American, he is very nice to Glassisch, who is sorry to see him leave. Paul resumes his close relationship with Edward. Edward, who has been to Berlin, sympathizes with his brother for leaving. Edwards comment that "you just up and left" seems to momentarily disturb him - you can see it in his expression and then he quickly suggests that he and Paul continue their journey.

I love the part where Maria hands Paul the blanket! Considering that Paul left her, she is quite civil to him.

When Paul throws the party for the village, he has the American band play "Stars and Stripes Forever." This reminded me of my visit to Oktoberfest in 1991. We went with a group of Germans that my husband worked with - a great time, except that a group of Americans kept asking the band to play this same selection not once, but several times! I like Sousa marches, but we wanted to hear German music.

One thing I noticed in the kitchen scene when Lucie is talking to Paul - on the side, Hermann and one of the little girls (Pauline's daughter?) are making fun of Lucie or perhaps her silly hat with the flag.

REFUGEES:

Reitz always inserts typical events of the time into the story. Outsiders were not welcome after WWI (Appolonia) and perhaps were more unwelcome after WWII when Germany was flooded with refugees from the east. My paternal grandfather's family came from Pommern, so I have read quite a few books and articles on this subject, as well as having heard stories from people. Germans did not want to share what little they had with Germans from the east. Pieritz lost everything and was refused sanctuary even from people he knew. Of course, Maria is totally stressed by everyone descending on her, but even without that, her reaction to Pieritz was not unusual.

There is a parallel between Appolonia and Klarchen - 2 beautiful dark haired strangers who cause problems.

I was happy that Katharina was able to see her three children together before she died. You have to love Marie Goot - almost everyone has a neighbor or aunt like her who says exactly what she thinks.

Susan

Date: Wed, 25 Feb 2004 20:51:57 +0000
From: <david.mascall ntlworld.com>

Dear Susan, and other contributors

I'd like to add to the debate. I haven't seen Episode 8 as I can't find my tape, so I'll have to work from memory again.

> PAUL:

> In spite of the fact that Paul is now a rich American, he is very nice to
> Glassisch, who is sorry to see him leave.

I'm not surprised that Glasisch should be the object of Paul's attention, and hence used by Reitz as a foil and contrast for Paul.

Firstly, Glasisch is more unchanged than any of Paul's other contemporaries; secondly, though Glasisch is a village "character" he is something of an "outsider" too, due to his strange manners; thirdly, I suspect that Paul could have an admiration for Glasisch as he doesn't compromise and seems unaffected by criticism from others.

It seemed to me from the early episodes before Paul's flight that he felt constricted and frustrated by the village, the village people and their attitudes, which eventually drives him to run away. On the other hand he also feels driven to return from time to time.

The theme returns with Herman in DZW, though in a different way...

> REFUGEES:

>

> There is a parallel between Appolonia and Klarchen - 2 beautiful dark haired
> strangers who cause problems.

Can anyone remind me of the problems Appolonia caused - though I suspect they had to do with a man....

> I was happy that Katharina was able to see her three children together
> before she died. You have to love Marie Goot - almost everyone has a
> neighbor or aunt like her who says exactly what she thinks.
>

Yes, I know exactly what you mean..... from experience.

Regards

David

Date: Sat, 28 Feb 2004 11:06:27 +0100
From: Bradnsj aol.com

Thanks again to Ivan for the excellent introduction.

The first image that got me thinking was the shadow on the wall in Berlin, as Martina enters the building to find Rudolf. Doesn't it remind anyone of a similar scene from 'Nosferatu'?

As Paul dismounts from the car and enters Schabbach he passes the house of Hans' family but doesn't speak.

Paul expects to walk straight into the Simon house; is this arrogance? We are shown from the beginning what his attitude is.

Paul realises straight from the start that his father must have died because of the flowers in the forge etc.

This is obvious, maybe, but Anton sitting in the parlour on his return parallels and echoes that of his father. Two wars - father and son - nothing changes.

Lucie's stumbling, but ingratiating apologies (in her case), reminds me of dozens of young Germans I met in the 60's in my travels. Almost the first thing they wanted to say was that they were ashamed of their parents' generation. Many of them chose

volunteering as a diversion from doing national service.

How is it that Kath lets Maria make all the decisions? She doesn't say a word when Maria decides who will stay and who won't.

Why are the characters of Eduard and Maria played by the same actors but not Pauline and Paul?

I didn't find the scene in the cemetery between Paul and Maria at all natural, convincing or satisfying.

Best wishes

Neil Bradley

Date: Tue, 2 Mar 2004 10:48:31 -0600
From: "Susan Biedron" <susan jsbiedron.com>

Neil's comments:

- > As Paul dismounts from the car and enters Schabbach he passes the
- > house of Hans' family but doesn't speak.
- >
- > Paul expects to walk straight into the Simon house; is this
- > arrogance? We are shown from the beginning what his attitude is.

I also expected Paul to speak to the basketmaker's family, but maybe after so many years, Paul wasn't sure, or he was waiting for Han's family to speak first. Then when Paul sees his house, he seems happy that everything looks the same. Probably when Paul lived at home, the villagers never locked doors. He is a little surprised the door is locked, but then is reassured when he finds the key in its usual place. (Some things never change.) I think also that he is a little arrogant to use the key and walk in - I wouldn't want my relatives to do that!

- > How is it that Kath lets Maria make all the decisions? She doesn't
- > say a word when Maria decides who will stay and who won't.

It is obvious now that Kath is in failing health - she has trouble getting around and Maria, her dutiful daughter-in-law is in charge of running the house. Kath lets her family take care of her now and lets Maria make daily decisions. Perhaps others have different view of this?

- > Why are the characters of Eduard and Maria played by the same actors
- > but not Pauline and Paul?

I thought Pauline was portrayed by the same actress! Perhaps I am missing something and need to read the cast list at the end. Eduard has the kind of face/body type that could be a young or old man. Perhaps the makeup people could not effectively age the actor who played the young Paul. Or perhaps they want to emphasize that the "good life" in America has changed Paul. The new older Paul doesn't bother me - he looks very American.

The change that really bothers me is Lottie.

- > I didn't find the scene in the cemetery between Paul and Maria at all

> natural, convincing or satisfying.

No, I didn't either! The viewer thinks "finally an answer." Maria gives up too easily in her questions to Paul. His response that he "doesn't know" is not acceptable. Maria says she understands why he wanted to leave Shabbach, but when she specifically asks him if he wasn't happy with her or their beautiful children - he doesn't say anything - what a cad.

I think - that years ago Paul felt pressured to get married and have a family, to do what was expected of him. But deep down he really wanted to see the world and seek opportunities not available in a little village. This is understandable, but he still owes Maria an answer for ruining her life.

Susan

Date: Thu, 4 Mar 2004 21:57:53 -0000
From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>

We seemed to have picked up some new contributors. Welcome David Mascal, Neil Bradley, and Jack Woolven to our little group. Thank you to Jack for the reference to the erfilm.de web-site. Even if you don't read German, as I don't, at least you can pick up who it was who said something and their name. It helped me in Part 9 with the names of 2 of Hermann's friends! But what has happened to some of our older loyal contributors?!! Where are you Thomas, Theresia, Joel, Maarten, Wolfgang and others??!! Give us the benefit of your thoughts.

With direct relevance to Part 8 Der Amerikaner we had 5 contributors and 8 posts. Where would we be without Susan?!! She had 3 posts.

Ivan Mansley.

Date: Sat, 6 Mar 2004 13:33:42 +0100
From: "Maarten Landzaat" <gijs xs4all.nl>

Ivan:

> Where are you, Thomas, Theresia, Joel, Maarten, Wolfgang and others??!!
> Give us the benefit of your thoughts.

Sorry to jump in after your conclusion. I did watch the episode 2 weeks ago, but I was very busy with my job, birthday parties and the birth of two of my best friends' children, so I didn't have much time.

I felt this episode illustrates that after the war, the American way of life came to Europe (Paul came to Schabbach). The narrative fact that Paul is not a real American but is also originally from Schabbach illustrates that the American way is not forced onto the Europeans, but this way of life was already dormant inside the Europeans, they were ready for it, and it is now coming out.

I remember Kath describes the Americans as something like "Mensche die wisse was sie wolle", and the economy as "everything on credit". She disapproves of these matters. And then she dies, along with her opinions.

It struck me that "People who know what they want" is obviously meant as pejorative,

whereas in these days "knowing what you want" is widely regarded as a virtue.

Even Maria knows what she wants now (for the first time?) when she sends poor Pieritz away.

About the last scene, on Anton's visions of an optics factory in the clean Hunsruck air: Ivan became emotional watching this scene, and I had similar feelings. I know this is the one scene that stuck with me for about 15 years. The strength and hope that people can show after the hardships of war or other disasters, is somehow very comforting and beautiful. I don't know if I'm describing it correctly now, but I think I know what you mean.

Ivan:

> P.S. 1. When Ernst tells Frigga not to look at the two men at the bar he
> says that one of them's an uncle. How does Frigga know that his uncle is
> the thin one, as she asks who the fatter one is?

Good question! She has no way of knowing, has she? A real script error?

Ivan:

> 3. I didn't much like the stylised scenes showing the stages of
> Anton's walk. They seemed out of place.

I Agree. They were caricatures, and missed subtlety.

About Klaerchen/Ernst:

I believe that Ernst must have really told her to go to Maria. Because if not, then her false story would immediately become apparent when Ernst would arrive. Would Klarchen have taken that risk? I don't believe so.

Neil:

> Why are the characters of Eduard and Maria played by the same actors
> but not Pauline and Paul?

I think Eduard's actor does a good job, but Maria as an older person is not very convincing to me. I think she overacts: she talks and walks just a little too slow.

Neil:

> I didn't find the scene in the cemetery between Paul and Maria at all
> natural, convincing or satisfying.

I did not have trouble with that scene. OK, it wasn't satisfying, but that's what's the story is about. I could sense the trouble they both had with discussing this in an open way. How could they after so many years? Talking about your feelings was not something people were used to in the forties/fifties I think.

Bye,
Maarten