

**DER ANSTÄNDIGE
THE DECENT ONE**



A Film by Vanessa Lapa

Israel, Austria, Germany 2014 / 96'

World Sales

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Cast

Tobias Moretti
Sophie Rois
Florentin Groll
Lotte Ledl

Antonia Moretti
Pauline Knof
Lenz Moretti
Markus Riexinger

Alexander Riemann
Thomas Zerck
Martin Lalis
Florian Wandel

Credits**Script:**

Vanessa Lapa
Ori Weisbrod

Archive Image:

Hermann Poelking-Eiken

Editors:

Sharon Brook
Noam Amit

Artistic Consultant:

Erez Laufer

Sound Designer:

Tomer Eliav

Original Score:

Jonathan Sheffer
Daniel Salomon
Gil Feldman

Grading:

Yoav Raz

Documents DOP:

Jeremy Portnoi

Picture Animation:

Miklos Falvay

Research:

Dorothea Otto
Sarah Strebelow
Oriana Almasi

Production Supervisor:

Mor Tregger

Der Anständige

"The best political weapon is the weapon of terror. Cruelty demands respect. Men may hate us, but we don't ask for their love; only for their fear and their submission."

Heinrich Himmler

Synopsis

On May 6th 1945, soldiers of the US Army occupied the Himmler family home in Gmund Germany where they discovered hundreds of private letters, documents, diaries and photographs. The film makes use of these materials to sketch the biography and expose the inner mind, ideals, plans and secrets of SS commander, the architect of the Final Solution - Heinrich Himmler.

How did this Catholic nationalistic middle-class young man become Hitler's henchman responsible for master minding, developing and executing the strategies that led to the murder of millions of Jews, homosexuals, Communists and Romany people? Where did his ideology originate? How did he see himself and how was he perceived in private by his wife Margarete, his daughter Gudrun and his mistress Hedwig? How could the man who often referred to so-called German virtues such as order, decency and goodness also write home in the midst of the war and Holocaust: 'Despite all the work I am doing fine and I sleep well'? How can a man become a hero in his own eyes but a mass murderer in the eyes of the world?

"In life, one must always be decent, courageous and kind-hearted."
(Himmler to his daughter, 1941, Poesie Album, Private Collection.)

Short Synopsis

Through previously undiscovered private letters, photos and diaries that were found in the Himmler family house in 1945, the "**The Decent One**" exposes a unique and at times uncomfortable access to the life and mind of the merciless "Architect of the Final Solution" Heinrich Himmler. Himmler writes, "In life one must always be decent, courageous and kind-hearted". How can a man be a hero in his own eyes and a mass murderer in the eyes of the world? A unique portrait of one the most prominent figures of the Third Reich: The Reichsfuhrer-SS: Heinrich Himmler.

About the director

Born and raised in Belgium, **Vanessa Lapa** has been living in Israel since 1995. An accomplished journalist, she produced and directed over a hundred factual reportages for Israeli television. Her documentary film “OLMERT – CONCEALED DOCUMENTARY” (Israel, 2009) was hailed as a unique cinéma vérité achievement, revealing the behind-the-scenes of the government and the private life of Israel’s Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Vanessa was also on the Israeli side of the production and content for the 52-minute documentary “Straddling the Fence” (USA, 2003) directed by New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, which aired worldwide. In 2007, she founded the Tel Aviv-based independent documentary film production company Realworks Ltd.

Director’s Note

The Decent One attempts to expose a previously unseen perspective on an often-approached subject. The film juxtaposes personal writings and photographs from the private lives of one of the highest-ranking Nazis and his family with the reality of the time, which Himmler himself relentlessly shaped in the background. The audience is thus granted personal access to the mind of the private man Heinrich Himmler and to the experiences, ideas, and emotions that turned him into the merciless “Architect of the Holocaust”. Since the film is told from the prism of Himmler and his family – first his parents and brothers, later his wife, daughter and lover – the audience experience the world during WWI and in the Weimar Republic from an average German middle class perspective, and later on from the privileged vantage point of a high ranking Nazi family. In this film, Himmler’s subjective perceptions of the outside world and his personal involvement with political and societal developments are what drives and shapes the viewer’s cinematic experience and reveals how cruelty and evil can grow out of apparent normalcy. The audience is left with the discomfort of struggling in between the two poles of emotional closeness to the characters’ very personal writings and the appalling deeds committed on their orders.

With a dramatic script based on carefully selected pieces of true personal history and political reality, brought to life by exclusively using actors’ off voices and archival footage, ***The Decent One*** mixes documentary and fiction conventions to create a new post-documentary form. This allows the viewer to “think with” and “feel with” the film instead of simply consuming it. It strives to uncover the deepest psycho-cultural reality of the most atrocious cruelty. The fiction is as real as the horror it constructively comes to document.

We witness how cruelty can grow from an apparent normality, and when fueled by ideology, economical reality, a Fuehrer, a whole people and a state

of the art technology, an individual who lacks self-confidence can become a hero in his own eyes and one of the biggest mass murderers in History.

We are curious to know more and dive into the personal lives of people who changed the world in a positive way. To dive into the personal lives of people who changed the world in a negative way, is way more uncomfortable, less attractive BUT not less interesting and probably more important.

At the core of this film there is an appeal for a cinema of insistent questioning instead of rapid foreclosure, clarifying distance in place of violating closeness, provocation and dialogue instead of consumption and consensus. Although there is no apparent guide of taking sides and making judgment, it projects a moral frame of reference urgent to our day and age: a multidimensional critical perspective as the audience's guide for empathy and individual responsibility.

The Himmler Private Collection - Background

In 2006 Realworks Ltd. acquired a collection of personal documents and photographs that were once the private property of one of the most powerful man and horrific criminal of the Third Reich: Heinrich Himmler.

There are several theories about how the documents found their way from Himmler's safe in his family residence in Gmund in 1945 to Tel Aviv more than 60 years later. The most probable way is the following:

Close to the end of World War II, Himmler was in hiding in Northern Germany while his wife and daughter were on their escape to Italy. American soldiers entered the Himmler house in Gmund and took the collection of written documents and pictures from Heinrich Himmler's safe, but they didn't hand them to the US authorities, as they should have done. Over the past five decades those documents changed hands, until they came into our possession. After an authentication process involving the top experts from the German national Archive, these documents now rest in a safe in Tel-Aviv.

CHAIN OF TITLE OF THE HIMMLER PRIVATE COLLECTION

Up to spring 1945:

The documents are at the Himmler family's residence "Haus Lindenfycht" in Gmund am Tegernsee locked in their private safe.

4 US GI's steal the collection from the house (Instead of handing them over to the US government like they should have done). They split the collection in 2 parts. 1910-1926 and 1927-1945.

First part of the collection: 1910-1926: Summer 1945, still in Germany, 2 of the GI's get in contact with Yashe, an intelligence officer in the US Army, who later became a Professor of German History at Berkley but has by now passed away. According to historian Werner T. Angress (†2010), Yashe exchanged this part of the documents from the soldiers for a bottle of whiskey.

In 1950, Bradley Smith and Prof. Tom Angress sold them to the Hoover Institute in California and wrote a book about the content of the documents - "Heinrich Himmler, a Nazi in the making 1900-1926".

Second part of the collection: 1927-1945: Late spring 1945, Marga and Gudrun Himmler escape from their house in Gmund in late April/early May 1945 to Italy. They are caught, interrogated. After a few months in a women prisoner of War camp, Marga and Gudrun are released.

1960s: Chaim Rosenthal, a painter gets hold of the collection. Rosenthal kept the collection in a black box under his bed for 40 years.

2006 – Rosenthal and his son decide to get rid of the collection to someone who will do "something important with it". Vanessa Lapa get to go and see the collection in order to make a documentary film about it. The collection belongs to Realworks Ltd. It is kept in a safe deposit box in Tel-Aviv since then.

The gap of almost 15 years between 1945 and the late 1960s remains a mystery. The people who are directly connected to the story have either died or aren't speaking. They are 3 plausible options: 1. A flee market in Brussels, Belgium. 2. A flee market in Los Angeles, USA. 3. From an American couple who was crossing the US-Mexican border.

Film Festivals

Berlinale – Berlin Film Festival (WP)

Official Selection Panorama – February 2014

41st Telluride Film Festival

Official Selection – August 2014

Jerusalem International Film Festival, Jerusalem

Winner – Best Documentary – July 2014

DocumentaMadrid 14 – Madrid Documentary Film Festival

Official Selection - Competition - May 2014

DOK. Fest – Munich International Documentary Film Festival

Special Screening – May 2014

Planete Doc Film Festival, Warsaw

Official Selection – Competition – May 2014

Israeli Academy Awards

Nominated for the Ophir Prize – Israeli Academy Awards – August 2014

Jameson Cinefest- 11 Miskolc International Film Festival

Official Selection – September 2014

Rio de Janeiro International Film Festival

Official selection - competition - September 2014

Bergen International Film Festival

Official selection - competition - September 2014

Reykjavík International Film Festival

Official selection- September 2014

Vancouver international film Festival

Official selection- September 2014

Movies on war Film Festival

Official Selection – November 2014

Vienna Jewish Film Festival

October 2014

Jewish International Film Festival, Australia

October 2014

Doc Aviv Galil Film Festival, Israel

November 2014

Budapest Israeli Film week

December 2014

Port Jefferson Documentary Series

Spring 2015

ZagrebDox

Official Selection March 2015

Selected press quotes

"A fabulous excursion into the deep mystery of evil."

– Errol Morris

"A chilling disconnects runs through (the film). The juxtaposition of Himmler's correspondence and German history is complex and fluid... Ms. Lapa's sources, acquired for the making of this documentary, are unusually rich (and their very quantity helps to dramatize the bureaucratic side of Nazi atrocity)... Many freshly haunting and illuminating undercurrents are brought forth."

– Nicolas Rapold, *The New York Times*

"'The Decent One' is rare film that at once advances the form of historical documentaries while simultaneously telling a riveting story from a new and wholly unanticipated and unexpected perspective. It features a wealth of new archival material, but it puts those images and voices to work in a novel way--the film is intimate, human, suspenseful, and terrifying, its momentum guided by individual self-delusion and the awful weight and fact of history."

-- Ken Burns, Filmmaker

"The Decent One is the most haunting documentary I've ever seen"

-- Andrew O'Hehir, [Salon](#)

"A virtuoso feat of documentary filmmaking."

- Hannah Brown, [The Jerusalem Post](#)

"A fascinating epistolary narrative."

– Keith Uhlich, [Time Out New York](#)

"Startling and intimate."

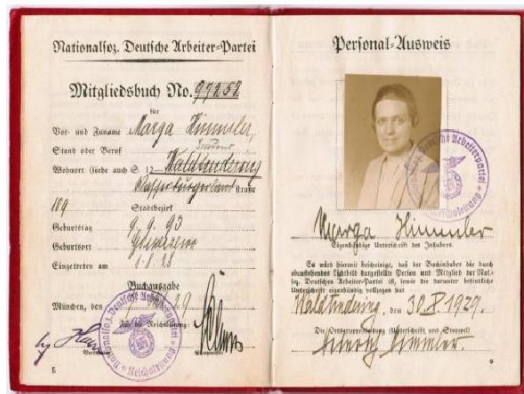
– Leonard Lopate, WNYC radio

[Click here](#) to listen to Lopate's interview with director Vanessa Lapa

"'The Decent One' a must-see not only for those of us who remain glued to just about everything that comes out of the Holocaust era but those who need to understand that no matter how evil we consider some people to be, the monstrous individuals consider themselves to be decent. "

-- Harvey Karten, [Compuserve](#)

Selected Stills (Original high quality will be supplied on demand)



1928 Marga Himmler's Nazi Party Membership Card



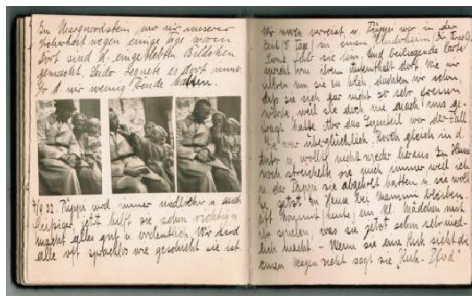
1944 Himmler with his daughter Gudrun and his wife.



1944 Himmler's Postcard



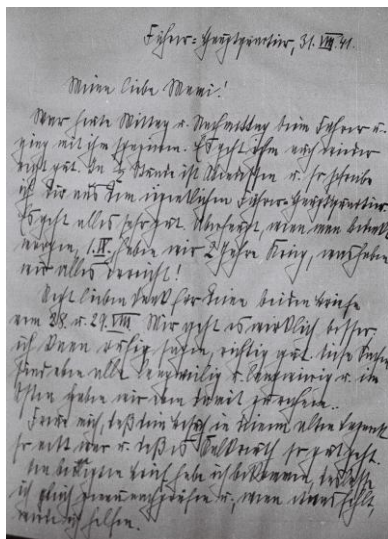
1936 Heinrich Himmler in Kiel.



1932 Marga Himmler's Diary



Heinrich Himmler playing tennis



1941 A letter from Heinrich Himmler to his wife Marga.



1939 The Himmler family at the Valepp



1941 Himmler and his daughter Gudrun in Gmund, Germany.



The Collection.