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## Look Who's Back: I Watched A Movie About Hitler And It Couldn't Be More Timely

Andressa Andrade · Thursday, August 24th, 2017

It was Monday, August 07, when I told my father I had seen this movie about Adolf Hitler on Netflix and asked if he wanted to watch it with me. We agreed to watch it on Saturday night, after dinner. We had no idea of how good our timing was going to be.

*Look Who's Back (Er Ist Wieder Da)*, the film by German director David Wnendt, was released and distributed by Constantin Film in 2015. Based on the same-titled satirical novel by Timur Vermes, it imagines what would happen if the dictator woke up and found himself in contemporary Berlin. Hitler (Oliver Masucci) quickly gains media attention, as people take him for a particularly good impersonator, not knowing he is the real man. After some time on television, he begins to plan how to use his popularity to get back into politics.

The Führer's reactions to the new world are hilarious. We get to see his amazement when facing new technologies and his outrage when he finds out what happened to the world politics after the War. Meanwhile, his weakest points — such as his poor artistic skills — are highlighted and explored. It is impossible not to laugh at him. But Masucci's performance, though comical, is very convincing. He perfectly mimics the dictator's speech pattern and mannerisms; the characterization is impressive.

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Yet what most deserves attention in the picture isn't the actor's brilliant impersonation, nor the jokes. What captured my attention were the unscripted scenes. During the filming, Masucci walked around several locations in Germany interacting with ordinary people while in character. The director *told The Guardian* that the idea "was to find out how people react to Hitler today, and to his ideas and to ask does he have a chance nowadays?"

The last question is what intrigues us. As the unscripted, documentary scenes appear in-between the scripted fictional ones, we reach the conclusion that unfortunately, the answer is "yes". What we see are people walking up to "Hitler" and telling him they love him, saluting him, and even asking him to "bring back labor camps". Masucci said he was shocked to see the *positive reception* the Führer got in the streets.

Imagine how scary it was to watch that, knowing what was going on in Charlottesville. One thing

is to see those scenes and think of them as something distant, or as the products of the minds of isolated people. Another thing is to watch them knowing that there are neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and Klansmen marching across a city with guns and torches in their hands.

Critics of the movie argued that it was a selective portrayal of the German society. They accused the director of picking only the bad and most shocking scenes while failing to show how the majority of the German people welcomed thousands of refugees during that same year.

But what happened in Charlottesville is undeniable. There's no space here to talk about "isolated cases". That was not only a dozen people supporting Hitler's ideals. We are talking hundreds. The numbers grow even bigger if we count the people who pledged their support online, after hearing about the rally.

It is even scarier because this happened in the USA, where hate speech is allowed to run free. In Germany, where the law prohibits Nazi symbols and references, people had to be in the presence of "Hitler himself" to bring their racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic opinions to light. In the USA, they know the Constitution's First Amendment, in defense of freedom of speech, protects them and gives them a free pass to spread hate. If Germany seems like a place where Hitler could still have a chance nowadays, the USA is a much more propitious environment for his ideas to flourish.

The film's main goal is to make people laugh. "But it should be the type of laugh that catches in your throat and you're almost ashamed when you realize what you're doing," the director said in his interview with *The Guardian*. Well, the laughter is now bitterer than ever.

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