



Marlene Dietrich Collection Berlin is a division of Filmmuseum Berlin - Deutsche Kinemathek

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**On the cover: Marlene –  
In the news: Sister Elisabeth**

The german magazine DER SPIEGEL devoted its top story of Nr. 25/00-06-19 to Marlene. It includes an essay by Hellmut Karasek on Marlene which may or may not have been stored in his pile of manuscripts for some time. However, it is a sympathetic article which tells some inside stories Karasek gathered from his friendship with Billy Wilder.

The annotated bibliography features some of the recent re-issues of books. It has even some new information for even such an expert as Steven Bach. We read for the first time that Steven did his doctor-thesis on Marlene.



Cover DER SPIEGEL issue 25/2000 from June 19th

The story of Liesel, Marlenes sister, is what beeing regarded as news. Liesel is, what DER SPIEGEL called "Marlenes embarrassing sister". Well, it was all in Bachs and Maria Rivas book

before but now as DER SPIEGEL prints it, it is news also for "Corriera della Sera" and the "Daily Telegraph". To cross-check what DER SPIEGEL reports we worked our way through the archive; all quotes which follow are from MDCB and protected by Copyright.

We know that Liesel was not in the Bergen Belsen concentration camp; she was the wife of Georg Will who ran three cinemas for soldiers - not only in Bergen and not unreasonable for these times. Georg Will by the way has always been in the entertainment industry – before 1933 he already owned cinemas and also ran the "Tingel-Tangel" cabaret where Friedrich Hollaender directed his own shows. Dr. Arnold Horwell - a german emigré - came as Lt. of the 102 Control Section in the British Army to Belsen in April 45. He found Liesel and worked as a courier for letters exchanged between Marlene and Liesel. There were no hard feelings by Captain Horwell towards Liesel. On May 19 1945 he wrote a short note to Marlene:

"I have pleasure in forwarding to you the attached letter from your sister. I found her well and quite cheerful to-day."

DER SPIEGELs angle is that Liesel, once the British troops arrived at Bergen Belsen, claimed to have been a prisoner of the concentration camp. This is true and has already been published by Steven Bach and Maria Riva years ago. DER SPIEGEL is stating that is why Marlene did not only deny ever having a sister but also tried to build up a legend that her family was resistant to the Nazis. This argument is based on one letter which DER SPIEGEL does not quote but refers to.

Here is Marlenes letter to Arnold Horwell, written in Regensburg on May 31, 1945:

"Dear Arnold,  
thank you so very very much for your letter. -  
You don't know what it meant to me to find you.  
In this mixed up world full of misery my  
thoughts hold on to you when I become too  
worried. Naturally I was shocked to hear that  
you left the camp and that you won't be near

my sister anymore. I don't know where to send letters to her except through you and I beg you to tell me where I should send them so I don't have to bother you with them. I hope the press did not get hold of her again - she is so shy and not used to the press. As you are in Hamburg now is there any way to get to Berlin? I have tried since I saw you to make contact with the Russians - but to no avail. I hear that there is an American C.I.C. in Berlin, but so far even General Bradley was unable to contact them for me. If you see any chance to give a message to someone going there please try at least to get news from my mother. Her name is Josephine von Losch, Fregestr. 70, Berlin-Friedenau. As she was marked "politically suspicious" she should be treated well now but I am afraid that it will take a long time for the Russians to screen people and they might not do it at all. Besides, having an aristocratic name might be bad in this present situation. I am sure you know what I mean. Forgive me for bringing you all my problems but I thought I'll tell you at least in case you hear something, being so close by. I am going to Salzburg now - they found my aunt and cousin in a camp nearby. Apparently everybody carrying my name was put in. My conscience becomes guiltier and guiltier. I never thought they would take women in who are too old to work even, like my aunt. - Please write me again. I had such joy with your letter -

Love Marlene."



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Marlene Dietrich in Regensburg June 1945

Imagine Germany 1945: Cities destroyed, families torn apart; rumour instead of news or facts. Marlene is one of millions who is seeking her relatives and tries to care for them. What is wrong with that? The least she was thinking of was to establish a legend that her family was resistant to the Nazis. Instead she feared that due to her working for U.S.O her family was suffering Nazi revenge. "My conscience becomes guiltier and guiltier." Does that sound like building up a cool calculated legend? Apparently she tries to support and protect her sister and her family. You need a lot of courage to blame somebody for that. Interestingly enough in a letter to DER SPIEGEL (Nr.27) a friend of Liesel blamed Marlene for not supporting her sister.

Concluding the article DER SPIEGEL writes that Elisabeth and Marlene stayed in contact till Elisabeth died in 1973 - which is true. And DER SPIEGEL goes on: "(Elisabeth) stayed in Belsen. That was her home." Meaning but not saying that her home was living at a place near the concentration camp. Now read excerpts from this report dated 25th of September, 1951, by Colonel R. J. McDuff, Assistant to General Bradley and make up your own mind why Elisabeth stayed "at home":

"1. Initial inquiries made in Hohne, Belsen area, resulted in Elizabeth Will being located at Kruetweg 15, Bergen. She occupies a two roomed flat on the top floor of a working-class dwelling house with her son. This flat was immaculately clean but not well furnished. It would appear that Frau Will is separated from her husband. The rent for the two-roomed flat at Kruetweg 15, Bergen, is paid by the husband from the proceeds of a cinema, which he owns in Hannover. This cinema is not, at the present time, doing a thriving business.

...

3. The financial circumstances of the Will family are not good. Other than the rent, which is paid by Herr Will, Sr., the son supports his mother from the wages he earns as a clerk in the DCRE Office at Hohne Camp. ... He is almost her sole means of support."

Elisabeth Will was as her son pointed out to us the loser of the family. Left alone by her husband she simply was too poor to move to another place and she did not know where to turn to. That is why she stayed at the place she knew.

The letters of Ltd. Horwell were given to the Imperial War Museum in London. The letter by Marlene Dietrich to which DER SPIEGEL referred in his article was displayed at an exhibit at the Imperial War Museum in 1991. So it took

almost nine years for the tough journalist to write this story. The son of Elisabeth is still

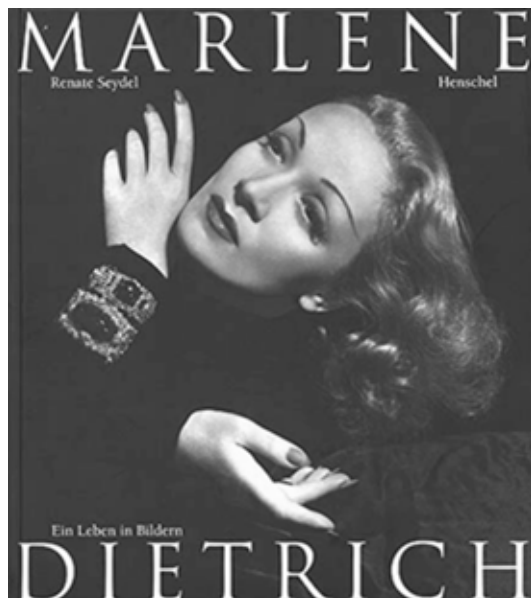
living in Germany but was not contacted by DER SPIEGEL or any other newspaper at all. Last quote from a letter Marlene wrote to Hasso Felsing:

"The fact that I am not mentioning my sister is simply a promise I gave and keep even today. When I found her in Belsen, she asked me to stay anonymous for ever. - So we travelled quietly together in England and France. As you may imagine I hate the press which invents everything to make my life being hell. Even my brother-in-law in Bavaria has to suffer from the press. (And Garbo lives a quite life in Switzerland!)"

### **New Books**

Henschel Verlag reissued the picture book on Marlene and added some pages with colour photographs at the beginning and the end of the volume. Basically it is the book from 1984 again. Therefore you should not be surprised that no date of Marlenes death is given and no reference is made to the book by Maria Riva. Make a new cover, add a few pages, change the imprint to a more recent date and there you go: a new book. Well, to be fair, it is a system Marlene liked for her own products too.

Renate Seydel: Marlene Dietrich. Ein Leben in Bildern. 2000: Henschel Verlag, Berlin. 312 p, 29,90 DM



TeNeues has published a calendar for 2001 with Marlene Dietrich pictures from MDCB. Price is \$11.95 or DM 19,95. To order online go to <http://www.teneues.com>

### **News:**

Judy Winter who plays "Marlene" in the Berlin Renaissance Theater has signed a contract to perform her act next year in Tokio, Osaka and Hiroshima. First show will be June 3rd 2001 in Tokio.

### **Auction results**

Posters at Christies, Beverly Hills, June 22nd:

Lot 149. SHANGHAI EXPRESS, Paramount, 1950s reissue, Italian poster, cond. A, LB, 55 x 39 in. -- \$2,585

Lot 194. TOUCH OF EVIL, Universal, 1958, six-sheet, cond. A, LB, 81 x 81 in.-- \$1,410

Lot 93. BLUE ANGEL (Der Blaue Engel), Paramount, R 1962, German poster, cond. A, 33 x 21 in., superior art with Dietrich in classic pose. -- \$646

Classifications are taken from the catalogue.

### **TV - USA**

The new women for women TV-channel Oxygen is showing in her series "Girl in the picture" films by Marlene and other woman stars. For Marlene got to: <http://schedule.oxygen.com/story.jsp?thread=1220>

### Exhibition:

Buenos Aires:

The Goethe-Institut is showing in July the Marlene Dietrich photo-exhibit; yes it is the same one as in London and if you wonder how that could possibly be it is thanks to Goethe Central Institute in Munich. They made three times the same exhibit and sending it around the world.

Press release of Goethe Institute Buenos Aires:

Marlene, imágenes de un mito  
Muestra fotográfica y retrospectiva:  
cinematográfica

”Quienquiera que haya conocido a Marlene Dietrich, habrá experimentado la perfección” Jean Cocteau  
Cosmopolita, sensual y siempre misteriosa, Marlene Dietrich tuvo un impacto tan profundo que su imagen se transformó en un ícono de la perfección en el mundo entero. La muestra fotográfica ”Imágenes de un mito” pasa revista a la construcción de esa imagen única y glamorosa. A la vez, también se refleja su valerosa actitud en contra del nazismo. Una retrospectiva con sus mejores films permitirá revivir la fascinación que provocó desde las pantallas la mayor diva de todos los tiempos.

Film showings will be at Teatro General San Martín, Cinemateca Argentina Buenos Aires. Starting July 7th

For further information go to:

<http://www.goethe.de/hs/bue/sppvors.htm#Marlene>

### **Research:**

We are looking for tapes of the AMC series ”The Hollywood Fashion Machine”, Mondays at 8.00 pm. We would be grateful for any lead.

### **Trivia:**



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This colour photograph was credited by DER SPIEGEL to be from the film ”Blonde Venus”. We all know it is not but that is simply all we know. It must have been taken at the end of the thirties or early forties. Taken by whom (photographer?), when and what for? Marlene herself did not remember the photograph. On the backside she wrote: „Is that me?” Those first three which come up with a reasonable answer (not to Marlene’s question) may choose getting either the ”Legends” booklet or the book ”Die Privatsammlung” which includes some very rare photographs. Enjoy the research.

End of Newsletter ten part two