

Das Leben der Anderen

(The Lives of Others)

Germany 2005/06.

Director: Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck.
137 mins. German with English subtitles



1. What is the film about?

This highly acclaimed, multi-award winning debut feature (2006 "Oscar" for Best Non-English Language Film) deals with the devastating impact of surveillance by the Stasi, the East German secret police, on the lives of artists and writers in 1980s GDR. An actress and her playwright partner, intellectual stars in the former East Germany, are spied on by secret police under orders from the Ministry of Culture. As the story unfolds, not only do the lives of those under surveillance change tremendously, but also the life of the spying Stasi agent, and the collision of their lives leads to a dramatic climax. "A suspenseful thriller with a complex and powerful moral drive ..." (The Guardian)

Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck was born in Cologne in 1973 and grew up in New York, Berlin, Frankfurt and Brussels. After Russian Studies at the National IS Institute in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), he studied Political Science, Philosophy and Economics at Oxford University. In 1996, he completed a period of practical study of direction with Richard Attenborough (production *In Love and War*) and then studied Directing at the Academy of Television and Film in Munich. His films include the shorts: **Midnight (Mitternacht, 1996)**, **For the Rest of Our Lives (Das Datum, 1997)**, **Dobermann (1999)**, **The Crusader (Der Templer, 2001)**, **What the Witness Saw (2002)**, and his *Academy Award*-winning feature debut **The Lives of Others (Das Leben der Anderen, 2005)**

[Quelle: <http://www.german-cinema.de>]

2. Themes related to the film

GDR, Stasi, Art & Literature in Society, Freedom and Censorship

3. Tasks

A. Activities before the film

- Have a look at a map of Germany. Where was the former GDR located? Try and re-trace the former border between the GDR and FRG.
- Find out about the political system of the GDR. Read the background information and explain the terms **Stasi**, **SED**, **OV** and **IM**.
- Find out about life of artists in the GDR, especially in East Berlin. Research especially the biography of the poet/songwriter Wolf Biermann and possible links to the film "Das Leben der Anderen"
- Check out the website of the film: <http://www.movie.de/filme/dlda/>
- What significance could the title of the film hold?

B. Activities after the film

1. Rearrange these sentences to show the correct order in which they happen in the film. Write your answers in the grid below.

L	In einem Buchladen sieht Wiesler Dreymans neues Buch. Er findet die an ihn gerichtete Widmung: „HGW XX/7 gewidmet, in großer Dankbarkeit“
S	Wiesler hält eine Vorlesung über Verhörmethoden.
P	Wiesler beginnt mit einen Operativen Vorgang gegen Dreyman
T	In einem Lokal trifft Wiesler auf Christa-Maria. Sie sagt ihm: „Sie sind ein guter Mensch.“
Z	Wiesler wird strafversetzt. Er öffnet jetzt Briefe im Keller des Stasi Gebäudes.
I	Wiesler versteckt die Schreibmaschine, um Dreyman zu schützen.
E	Nach der Wiedervereinigung, trägt Wiesler Prospekte aus.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
S	P	I	T	Z	E	L

2. There is a small, rather funny dialogue in the film between Wiesler and a little boy. Who says what? Arrange the speech balloons in the right order.



A. „Weißt du überhaupt was das ist, die Stasi?“

B. „So...Wie heißt denn dein...“

C. „Mein was?“

D. „Bist du wirklich bei der Stasi?“

E. „Ja, das sind so Männer, die andere einsperren, sagt mein Papa.“

F. „Du bist aber komisch, Bälle haben doch keine Namen.“

G. „...dein Ball, wie heißt denn dein Ball?“

Who is talking?	What is said? (A-G)
Kleiner Junge:	D
Herr Wiesler:	A
Kleiner Junge:	E
Herr Wiesler:	B
Kleiner Junge:	C
Herr Wiesler:	G
Kleiner Junge:	F

3. Choose words from the list below that describe the following groups, the one in favour of the regime (the Minister, Stasi etc) and the one opposing the regime (Dreyman, Jerska, Hauser etc.)

Für das Regime	<i>das Berufsverbot</i> <i>einschüchtern</i> <i>der Spion</i> <i>beobachten</i> <i>widersprechen</i> <i>protestieren</i> <i>abhören</i> <i>lauschen</i> <i>verbieten</i> <i>Angst</i> <i>verwanzen</i> <i>der Dissident (eine Person die anders denkt, als die Regierung)</i> <i>der Widerstand</i> <i>die Meinungsfreiheit</i> <i>protestieren</i> <i>verhören</i> <i>überwachen</i>	Gegen das Regime
<i>überwachen</i>		<i>protestieren</i>

4. Describe the people using the words below.

Georg Dreyman ist _____

Christa-Maria Sieland ist _____

Gerd Wiesler ist _____

Bruno Hempf(the minister) ist _____

- | | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| mutig | glücklich | lebenslustig | ernst | leichtsinnig |
| ängstlich | entschlossen | traurig | energisch | sympathisch |
| lieb | sorglos | passiv | aktiv | engagiert |
| unsympathisch | depressiv | lustig | naiv | abweisend |
| wütend | deprimiert | verständnislos | verständnisvoll | autoritär |

5. What do you think of the end of the film? Could you imagine another ending? Write your own ending!