

The Representation of the Denazification of John Rabe in *John Rabe* (German-Chinese-French Film):

“Just a Member of the Nazi Party” and a Genre of Good German Nationals⁽¹⁾

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1. Problem and Intention

John Rabe, directed by Florian Gallenberger in 2009, is a joint production of German, French, and Chinese film companies. This is a kind of historical movie based on the life of John Rabe (1882–1950). It won the 2009 German Film Award for Best Feature Film. It can be said that *John Rabe* was the most highly regarded work among the German public that year. Though famous Japanese actors such as Teruyuki Kagawa appear in this movie, it was not shown publically in Japan.

Rabe was a German businessman born in Hamburg. He went to China during the age of the Ch'ing dynasty around 1908. Since then, he had lived mostly in China for about 30 years. He joined Siemens German in 1911. It was a multinational industrial conglomerate company that provided mainly the infrastructure for electricity supply and the telephone in China. Rabe became director of the Siemens Nanking subsidiary in 1931. He was at the turning point of his life when the Imperial Japanese Army captured Nanking in 1937. European and American foreigners living in Nanking at the time established the International Committee in order to protect civilian populations of Nanking by creating a neutral safety zone. Rabe was elected as its leader.

After the war, the name of John Rabe spread widely throughout the world because the existence of his diary, “The Living Buddha of Nanking,” which is said to have been written by Rabe in those days, became widely known. The existence of his diary was made known to the public in 1995. It was edited by Erwin Wickert, German diplomat and

(1) This paper is based on the Japanese version published in *Studies in The Humanities and Sciences*, Vol. LIII, No. 2 (February 2013), pp. 143-157.

historian, and published in 1997⁽²⁾. The title of the diary is *Der gute Deutsche von Nanking: John Rabe*. This diary was taken notice of because it was a description of the act of the Japanese Army in Nanking by a person neither from Japan nor China. The story of the film *John Rabe* is based on this publication. The expanded and revised edition with new essays by Wickert and photos of the movie was published in 2009 while the film was being shown to the public⁽³⁾.

John Rabe is a kind of epic in which a courageous businessman protects Chinese people from the Japanese Army. The center of its theme describes him as “a good German,” just as it appears in the title of the diary. He was, however, a member of the National Socialist German Workers’ Party not only in the movie, but also in actual life. The fact becomes an obstacle when describing him as a good German. Therefore, the film *John Rabe* came up with various ideas in order to separate Rabe from National Socialism. This paper intends to make clear what kind of devices are used in the film, and to place these devices in the context of those German films, which portray Germans as a good people, including international joint productions, particularly from the year 2000 and onwards.

2. A Genre of “Good German Nationals” in German Films

What is a tendency in German films of the 2000s? Sabine Hake says that German films from 1990 and onward depoliticized Nazi Germany by using a variety of popular entertainment such as spectacular scenes, melodramatic and sentimental stories which are somewhat humorous, and then they changed the history of the Nazis so that the films could be watched with pleasure⁽⁴⁾. After the publication of Rabe’s diary, *Der gute Deutsche von Nanking*, as if film-makers were responding to it, since 2000, the character of “a good German national” has played an important part in German films based on material from Nazi Germany. This means that other politicalizations of the Nazi Story began. Moreover, film-makers use international or transnational story structures which play a vital role in depicting a “good German national.” These story structures involve relations

(2) *Der gute Deutsche von Nanking, John Rabe*, hrsg. von Erwin Wickert, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, Stuttgart 1997.

(3) *John Rabe, Der gute Deutsche von Nanking, Das Buch zum Film von Oscar-Preisträger Florian Gallenberger mit Ulrich Tukur und Daniel Brühl*, hrsg. von Erwin Wickert, München 2009.

(4) Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema*, London 2008, p. 213.

between a leading German figure and other nationalities, occasionally being a Jewish-German person. The reason this paper does not say a “good German,” and specifically says a “good German national” is that German films in the 2000s have a close relationship to other nationalities.

Nirgendwo in Afrika (Germany 2001) is one of the most typical works which portray Germans as a good people. This movie begins with the transnational setting of a Jewish jurist Walter along with his wife Jettel and his daughter Regina fleeing from persecution in his homeland Germany to Kenya, Africa. In this land, through interexchange between nations, he realizes again that he himself is a German national. After this, the movie ends with the transnational conclusion that he makes a choice to go back to his homeland again.

There is a scene in *Nirgendwo in Afrika* that characterizes Walter distinctly as a good German national. After the war, He is requested from his own country, Germany, to work as a jurist once again. He wants to come back to his homeland, but his wife Jettel does not want to return to Germany and hopes to stay in Africa. Walter says, “This land helped our life, but this is not our land.” It is reasonable to read the self-awareness of his German nationality from his lines. These lines sound somewhat nostalgic. Walter talks about his own idea of persuading his wife into coming back to Germany. He says, “I am a jurist. I love my job. And I have the presumptuous idea that I could be useful in this new Germany.” His wife says that he is “a bloody idealist,” but he disagrees with her. So he said back to her, “It is not a swearword, but it stands for belief in humanity.” From this scene, his national identity turns out not to be related to mere nostalgia, but based on an ethic value. In this way, Walter is characterized as a “good German national.”

Some productions depict good German nationals in international exchanges through music. *Der Pianist* (France, UK, Germany and Poland 2002) is one of the most important films of them. The leading figure, Szpilman, is a Jewish- Polish pianist. An important scene is one where a German officer finds Szpilman hiding in a deserted building trying to flee from the German army. The officer lets him play the piano which happens to be there in the building. The officer is touched by the piano music played by Szpilman, and he gives Szpilman something to eat and to wear. Szpilman thanks the officer with all his heart, but the officer says, “Don’t thank me. Thank God. It’s His will that we should survive.” From this scene, the good deed of the officer is not depicted as one filled with

sentimentality only caused by the impression of the music, but as one based on a certain religious ethic. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to think that the German officer is depicted, at least in this scene, as a “good German national.”

Since 2005, German films which have the tendency to have properties obviously different from the previously mentioned two movies have appeared. While the previous two works surely represent good German nationals, their roles are very limited in the entire story. However, the German films that aimed principally at representing German nationals began to appear from 2005 and onward. The common characteristic of them is that the heroism of the protagonists risking their own lives is depicted in the international or transnational context. The film *John Rabe* is the most typical one among them.

A pivotal work is probably *Sophie Scholl: Die Letzten Tage* (Germany 2005). This is a movie in which a female student at the University of Munich resists the Nazis while risking her own life. The leading figure, Sophie, is a member of the White Rose, a resistance to the Nazis. She is arrested for distributing handbills of anti-Nazism in the university. After an investigation, she is tried and executed shortly later. Since she says “conscience” and “idea” over and over while under investigation, there is no doubt that her heroism includes a strong morality. It is obvious that she is depicted as a good German national. The question is whether this movie is successful from an international or transnational viewpoint. It is remarkable that Sophie is anxious about the future of Germany as one of its nationals. She says, “The name of Germany will be stained forever, if the young German will never deprive Hitler of power and never help to make a new, spiritual Europe.” In this way, her morality that makes her anxious about the future of Germany turns out to be represented in an international and transnational context such as Europe.

Dresden (Germany 2006) depicts a “good German national” in international relations more obviously. The leading figure Anna is a German nurse. She is a woman so courageous that she never stops a medical treatment during an air raid. One day, Anna secretly treats an injured English soldier from a hostile country. Although she has a fiancé, she falls in love with the English soldier. Anna, the Englishman, and her fiancé help one another and try to survive the air raid on Dresden. While Anna is depicted as a good German in principle, her morality is questionable because she is unfaithful to her fiancé. However, *Dresden* gives a great ethical meaning to her affection for the Englishman in the end. When the English soldier gets caught in the debris from the air

raid and can no longer escape, she makes up her mind to stay with him. And then she says, "I am free." From her lines, we can read that this movie gives ethical worth to her self-sacrificial act and tries to depict a "good German national" as a heroine in international relations.

With a more perfect morality in an international relation, *Nordwand* (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland 2008) tries to describe a "good German national." This is a film in which a good German mountain climber Toni challenges climbing the Eiger, a mountain in the Bernese Alps in Switzerland, through the north face with his best friend while competing against a team of two Austrians who belong to the Austrian Nazi Party. A turning point of the story is the scene in which one of the two Austrians is injured and the German team tries to cooperate and help him. It is very important that this film depicts Toni's heroism not as a deed done to reach the summit while risking his own life, but as a humanistic international-cooperation act. Toni tries to come down the mountain with the Austrian rivals so that all four persons come back alive, even though he had to give up reaching the summit and his own life was more endangered because of supporting the injured person. In this way, the films about Nazi Germany began to remarkably depict a heroic German national in an international or transnational context from 2005 and onwards. It can be said that *John Rabe* appeared at the height of this trend. The story begins with the transnational setting in which the leading figure, Rabe, comes back to his homeland, Germany, finally after living in China for almost 30 years. As he is getting ready to travel to Germany, he is elected as the leader of the International Committee organized against the Japanese Army in the Battle of Nanking. The climax of the story is the scene in which Chinese people defend the Nanking Safety Zone organized in Nanking by the International Committee. The Chinese are blocking the gate by standing in front of it risking their lives against the Japanese Army that tries to remove it by force. When the Japanese Army is just about to shoot them, the members of the International Committee that consists of the German Rabe, an American doctor, a French headmistress, the reverend of an Anglican church, a Jewish diplomat of Germany, and a Chinese secretary Han along with Rabe join the Chinese people. In this way, a great international relation is organized in the movie. In the middle of the movie, Rabe negotiates with Prince Asaka through tactics. As a result, he succeeds in helping them and becomes a hero.

The film *John Rabe* is an attempt to depict a "good German national" in a large

international relation. However, the fact that Rabe was indeed a member of the Nazi Party must have been an obstacle for depicting him as a good German national when the movie is based on a real person. The mass media is actually interested in the fact that Rabe was a member of the Nazi Party⁽⁵⁾, but the attempt itself to depict a member of the Nazi Party as a good German national must have been a motivation for making this film. Therefore, this paper has to explore ideas *John Rabe* comes up with in its story in order to depict Rabe as a good German national.

3. An Analysis of the Structure of the Story: The Denazification of the Representation of John Rabe

3-1: John Rabe as “Just a Member of the Nazi Party”

One of the ideas the film *John Rabe* comes up with clearly in its story in order to depict Rabe as a “good German national” is to position Rabe as “just a member of the Nazi Party” and to separate him conceptually from a person who believes in National Socialism. There are three instances in which this idea is present.

a) Members of the Nazi Party in Nanking and “Real National Socialists”

Rabe belongs to the local branch of the Nazi Party in Nanking. Werner Fliess will replace Rabe as director of the Siemens Nanking subsidiary, and he is also a member of the Nazi Party. In the scene where Fliess visits the local branch of the Nazi Party in Nanking, he is depicted as the typical person who believes in Nazism more starkly than other members of it, including Rabe.

When Fliess arrives at the local branch of Nanking, the members are having fun with cards. First, he frowns at this situation. Secondly, when he notices a photo of the King of England and questions about it, a portrait of Hitler appears under the photo. Because the local branch of Nanking shares the room with the English Veterans Club, each group must change the portrait hanging on the wall according to who uses the room at the moment. Fliess is scandalized when sharing the room with the English Veterans Club

(5) V. g. Jan Schulz-Ojala, Die Lgende vom guten Nazi, *Der Tagesspiegel*, Berlin, 1. 4. 2009 und Thomas Abeltshauser, Noch ein guter Nazi, Überlebensgroßes Epos über einen Retter wider Willen: “John Rabe”, *Die Welt*, Berlin, 2. 4. 2009.

alone, and what is even worse is that the members of the local branch of Nanking are playing cards without exchanging the portraits under the photo of the King of England. He is very disgusted at their indifference.

Meanwhile, Hans Scheel who is a very friendly baker appears a few minutes later. While Scheel apologizes to Fliess for being late, he offers cinnamon rolls to Fliess. His behavior, however, is so overly friendly that Fliess disliked it. Fliess is unable to hide his irritation at the end, and then he says ironically, "Did you really join the National Socialist Party to eat pastries under a photo of the King of England?" Scheel replies, "No! We have to talk, too." His inappropriate response definitely makes Fliess angry.

Fliess gets angrier at members of the local branch of Nanking for not taking good care of the flag which was sent for the anniversary of the party. The donated flag had been left wrapped in its package, a part of which had been torn making a small piece of the flag visible. It has never been spread out and has been left as it was on the desk the whole time. Fliess blames members of the local branch of Nanking for not being "real National Socialists," and leaves there with the flag of the party.

Considering the circumstances mentioned above, it turns out that *John Rabe* intends to depict how indifferent to the National Socialism the members of the local branch of Nanking were. The local branch of Nanking was actually only a socializing group of people from the same country who live in a foreign country. Rabe's idea is the same as theirs on this point and he is discriminated from a devotee of Nazism.

b) Discrimination between being a National Socialist and being just a Member of the Nazi Party

The conceptual device to justify Rabe as a "good German national" is presented in the film itself. Rabe is awarded "Hero of the Chinese people" by Chiang Kai-shek before he returns to Germany. Wilson, an American doctor, and Dupres, a director of a women's college, talk about attending the award ceremony with each other. Wilson dislikes Rabe because he is a Nazi, and he refuses to attend the ceremony for Rabe. Dupres asserts that Rabe is "just a member of the Nazi Party," and is not, therefore, a "Nazi". The term "Nazi" is generally a disparaging word for "Nationalsozialist" in Germany. This term "Nationalsozialist" has two meanings. One is a person who believes in National Socialism, and the other is a person who is a member of the German National Socialist Workers'

Party. Normally a person who is a member of the Nazi Party is also a person who believes in National Socialism. However, Dupres separates the two meanings of the term “Nazi”, and limits the term “Nazi” to a person believing in National Socialism. Therefore, a member of the National Socialist Party does not necessarily believe in the tenets of National Socialism. In this way, Rabe is depicted as just a member of the National Socialist Party who is not a “Nazi” because he is not a person who believes in National Socialism.

c) A Hooked Cross Defending Chinese People from the Japanese Army

When the Japanese Army begins to bomb in the evening, Chinese employees of Siemens and their families try to take refuge in the premises of Siemens. Fliess shuts the gate on them to protect the facilities of the company from the bombing, but Rabe gives orders to open the gate and to let them enter the premises when he gets home. The difference between Fliess’s and Rabe’s sense of values becomes quite apparent, though the two of them belong to the National Socialist Party. Whereas Fliess, a National Socialist, does not pay any attention to the lives of the Chinese people in order to protect facilities of the company, Rabe is depicted as a humanist helping the Chinese people.

After letting the Chinese people enter the premises, Rabe takes out from the trunk of Fliess’s car the flag of the party that Fliess took away before, and then he gives orders to turn the floodlight on and to spread the flag. Just then, the hooked cross appears fluttering beautifully and mysteriously lit up with the floodlight and flames in the dark. The Chinese people gather under the hooked cross, as instructed by Rabe. The Japanese planes recognize the hooked cross and turn back as Rabe expected because Japan and Germany have entered into a pact. This is one of the most impressive scenes in the entire movie.

Naturally, there is the risk that the hooked cross implies that the Nazis are the very guardian of the Chinese people. This message is exceedingly sensational. There is no denying the risk that the hooked cross is idolized as a sacred symbol of justice. If that is the case, the audience would suspect that Rabe is not just a member of the National Socialist Party, but also a Nazi, or a person who believes in National Socialism.

The risk and suspicion were, however, ridden by the insertion of the scene in which Chinese people remain absent-mindedly using the hooked cross as a coverlet or rug. It is no exaggeration to say that the flag of the party is a symbol of the safety for the Chinese

people in the film, but the hooked cross is slightly soiled and no longer an object of the idolization, even if they feel a sense of closeness to it. They gather around the flag of the party just because it can actually prevent Japanese planes from bombing Chinese people. Whereas the flag of the party is emancipated from the idolization, it functions as a practical article for humanistic use. This scheme applies to Rabe himself as well. The film *John Rabe* demonstrates that Rabe had nothing to do with Nazism and that being a member of the National Socialist Party is compatible with being a humanitarian.

3-2: Rabe's Trust in Hitler

Rabe is just a member of the party and separated from a person who believes in National Socialism, but he is depicted as a person who trusts in Hitler. This trust, however, does not mean that Rabe is a National Socialist. It functions, rather, by taking him away from National Socialism.

First of all, his trust in Hitler is useful in depicting him as a straightforward person, but he trusts in Hitler excessively in some cases. To trust Hitler is very irrelevant in our time. In short, as the German media also points out⁽⁶⁾, the film gives an impression that Rabe is naïve and good-natured, although he was a credulous person. His trust in Hitler functions, therefore, by paradoxically separating Rabe from a fanatic National Socialist and portrays him as just “a member of the National Socialist Party.” This paper uses four examples to illustrate this point.

a) Rabe's Complaint to the new director of the Siemens Nanking subsidiary, Fliess

The day after the bombing of the Siemens Nanking subsidiary by the Japanese Army, Rabe disputes with the new director of the Siemens Nanking subsidiary, Fliess, over management of the affair. Though the closing of the Siemens Nanking subsidiary has been already determined, Fliess wants to close it sooner, now that the Japanese Army is attacking Nanking. From the outset, however, Rabe is against the closing of Siemens Nanking subsidiary, and he objects to Fliess's idea, considering the Chinese employees. The dispute between the new and old directors comes down to a question of

(6) Harald Eggebrecht, Naiver Nazi, Hergerichtet: “John Rabe” von Florian Gallenberger, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, München, 2. 4. 2009.

which director would have the authority to supervise the Siemens Nanking subsidiary. The resolution they reach is that neither of them has the authority under contract at that point. Rabe asserts that the Chinese deputy Han has the authority at present and Rabe has him give Fliess instructions not to take his own way in the Siemens Nanking subsidiary. Fliess cannot object to this order. He throws away impolitely the key of the guesthouse in which he will stay and he walks away from them in anger.

Immediately after this scene, Rabe shows his trust in Hitler. While Rabe feels quite embarrassed because he is late for breakfast with his wife Dora and smooths over his feelings with a whistle, he complains about Fliess. “If the Führer knew the people they send here... It’s just ridiculous.” The phrase “If the Führer knew...,” which Rabe said in a casual manner, was the idiomatic expression often used at that time. It does not mean anything concrete in this scene yet, but it points out that Rabe does not doubt the personality of Hitler at all. So when he feels awkward, he uses the phrase unconsciously to smooth over his feelings. Because Dora is not concerned about these words, we can gather that Rabe’s trusting in the personality of Hitler is self-evident between him and Dora. The phrase which Rabe said shows at least that he feels such a strong attachment to Hitler, and that he can grumble to Hitler about his company. Naturally, the attachment makes us suspect that Rabe has the intensity of feelings towards Hitler and lets the tension between Rabe and the National Socialism run high in him.

b) A Telegram to Hitler (I)

In the film, the Japanese Army commits atrocities against Chinese people after it has occupied Nanking. Rabe watches the terrible sights with a film projector, and his heart aches. Therefore, he makes up his mind to report it to Hitler so that Hitler stops the Japanese Army from committing the atrocities.

To the Führer of the German people,
Chancellor Adolf Hitler.

My Führer,

As a loyal party member and upstanding German, I turn to you in a time of great need. The Japanese Imperial troops conquered the city of Nanking on December

12, 1937. Since then I have witnessed atrocious crimes against civilians. Please help to end this catastrophe, and make an appeal to our Japanese allies in the name of humanity.

With a German salute.

Rabe's trust in Hitler which already has been shown unobtrusively in the film is embodied when he writes to Hitler. However, Rabe is not depicted as a fanatic believer of Hitler. We must take notice that his trust in Hitler consists of expectations not for the military cooperation between Germany and Japan, but for the faithful relations in which both nations can cooperate with each other in a humane way. Rabe is firmly convinced that if one person shows good faith towards another person, the latter will almost certainly show good faith in return. The expectations for Hitler's humanity and sense of justice reflect rather Rabe's own humanity and sense of justice. It is Rabe that is a humanitarian and faithful person. The report to Hitler functions to express Rabe's character. Rabe never doubts that Hitler does not have the same humanity and sense of justice Rabe has himself. It seems very irrelevant to us today to trust in the personality of Hitler. The expectations of Rabe for Hitler's personality, therefore, show Rabe's naïve character, as well.

c) A Telegram to Hitler (2)

Rabe requests Prince Asaka straightforwardly to stop the atrocities of the Japanese Army. The faithful character of Rabe is depicted in this scene as well. Rabe is firmly convinced that if one person shows good faith towards another person, the latter will almost certainly show good faith in return. He thinks, therefore, that Prince Asaka would stop the atrocities when he tells Prince Asaka straightforwardly that the Japanese Army is doing a barbarous act in Nanking. However, a Jewish German diplomat, Rosen, who has negotiated together, gets angry at Rabe. He asserts that Rabe does not know a thing or two about diplomatic negotiations. Rosen does not think that diplomatic negotiations end successfully when one does nothing but demand what one wants without showing the attitude that one could give what the other wants.

In order to demonstrate how improper Rabe's negotiations were, Rosen mentions the telegram that Rabe sent to Hitler. Rosen asks Rabe whether Hitler would actually reply

to Rabe. Rabe never doubts that Hitler would deal with the problem. Rosen gets angrier and angrier with Rabe. Rosen leaves Rabe in a rage by car. Rabe does not know why Rosen got furious at him, and he is standing rooted to the spot.

It is important that the emotion gap between Rosen and Rabe is emphasized. The reason why Rabe provoked radically the anger of Rosen is not because Rabe does not know how to negotiate diplomatically, but because Rabe's trust in Hitler is too naïve. Rosen's true motive is unknown to Rabe. However, the audience does not know it yet at this point either. It will turn out later that Rosen, a Jewish German person, has been treated unfairly by the Nazi Government, which the rage of Rosen against Rabe foreshadows.

Whether he expects Prince Asaka or Hitler to deal with the problem, Rabe's expectations are very naïve. The naïve character of Rabe has already been better known to the audience, and the emotional gap between Rosen and Rabe irradiates the naïve character of Rabe.

d) A Telegram to Hitler (3)

The contest to kill 100 people using a sword by the Japanese Army, which is called "hyakunin-giri kyōsō" in Japanese, is mentioned in the International Committee for the neutral safety zone. In the affair, Rabe lost himself the Chinese driver whom he took care of. Rabe says, "I wrote to Hitler. He has to intervene in the Japanese hassle. You may laugh, Dr. Wilson, but I'm sure, soon as Führer knows what is going on here, he would intervene." Wilson sneers at Rabe and the other members of the committee do not agree with his opinion either. They no longer pay any attention to his assertion, and the consultations continue independently from him.

This scene clearly brings out a unique character of Rabe. It is very irrelevant not only to us, but also to the members of the committee to trust in the personality of Hitler. However, the words and actions of the straightforward and sincere Rabe seem to us so naïve that we suspect that he had no information about Hitler and Nazism in the first place. Therefore, the frequent depiction of Rabe's naïve trust in Hitler functions in the film paradoxically making Rabe more and more distant from Hitler and Nazism.

3-3: The Respect of Rabe for a Nazi Salute

The film *John Rabe* emphasizes the naiveness of Rabe's trust in Hitler to distance Rabe from the National Socialism. This schema applies to the relationship between Rabe and a Nazi salute. This paper will show three examples of this.

a) A Nazi Salute of Chinese Employees

In the beginning of the film, Rabe orders Chinese employees to stand at the Nazi salute in order to show them to Fliess who is the new director of Siemens Nanking subsidiary. He intends to tell Fliess how hard he made them learn the salute and wants to show off the results to Fliess. The film develops its story by displaying how hard Rabe tried to make Chinese people acquire German culture and how strongly he is attached to the fruit of his effort he himself has built up in China. In this film, the Nazi salute of the Chinese employees functions as one of the facts that can prove Rabe has built up a lot in China.

While this film implies the close relationship of Rabe and the National Socialism here and there, as this paper already stated, the film distances Rabe from Nazism. In the film, the scene in which Rabe makes the Chinese employees stand at the Nazi salute is the first of scenes that gives us the impression that Rabe is close to National Socialism. This scene functions as an important part of its strategy for separating the two later throughout the entire story.

b) A Nazi Salute of Rabe to the Japanese Army which Claims a Customs Duty

In the middle stage of the story, there is the scene in which Rabe gives a Nazi salute to the Japanese Army.

When Rabe brings food into the safety zone, the Japanese Army insists collecting a customs duty. He protests against it. He gives a Nazi salute to Japanese soldiers to show that he is a German national. A Jewish German diplomat, Rosen, watches the situation meaningfully.

Rabe negotiates with the Japanese soldiers through a Nazi salute. This attitude functions to give an audience the impression that Rabe is closely connected to the Nazi Party on the one hand, and to express that he is a sincere and just person on the other. This scene shows that he expects the faithful relationship between Germany and its ally

Japan, in the same way he tried to stop the Japanese Army from bombing the hooked cross. Demanding sincerity and justice from a person to negotiate with is nothing but a reflection of Rabe's.

The meaningful look of Rosen watching Rabe give a Nazi salute leaves a strong impression on this scene, and this foreshadows Rosen refusing to give the Nazi salute later.

c) Rosen's Refusal to Give a Nazi Salute

When Rabe witnesses an atrocity of the Japanese Army, he protests against a Japanese soldier. By means of a Nazi salute, he desperately lets the Japanese soldier know that he is a German national in this case as well. The Japanese soldier does not understand Rabe's appeal easily, and he points his gun at Rabe. Rabe demands that Rosen should also give a Nazi salute and let the Japanese soldier know that they are both German nationals. However, Rosen says raising his right hand, "Heil Hintern!" The German word "Hintern" means a backside of a person.

Rabe and Rosen managed the difficult situation, but Rabe questions Rosen's words and actions. Rabe pays respect to Hitler and says, "All the same, he is the Führer of the German people." Rosen feels repelled by the blame from Rabe and confesses at last that he has felt hostile toward the Nazis and has been dissatisfied with Rabe who feels a sense of closeness to Hitler. Friedrich Rosen, Rosen's father, worked as a German ambassador for 20 years and also acted as foreign minister in Germany, but he was forced to leave for China and died there two years ago simply because his father, Ignanz Moscheles, was Jewish. Rosen also resigned himself to a low position as secretary, though he had already worked for many years as embassy councilor. Rabe knows the reason why Rosen refused to give a Nazi salute.

From these situations, we guess that Rabe knows practically nothing about Hitler and the Nazi Party to begin with. It can be said that Rabe may not know much of the world by nature or that he may not be well informed about conditions in Germany because he has lived 27 years in China.

Nevertheless, the reason why Rabe trusts Hitler completely and gives a Nazi salute without hesitation is somewhat clarified. This film, therefore, gives the impression to the audience that Rabe has nothing to do with the National Socialism as a result.

4. Conclusion

In order to depict Rabe as a “good German national,” the film *John Rabe* positions Rabe fundamentally as “Just a Member of the Nazi Party,” and separates him conceptually from a National Socialist. On the other hand, this film gives us the impression that Rabe is closely connected with National Socialism by using a hooked cross, a Nazi salute, and Rabe’s trust in Hitler. However, these things and Rabe’s behaviors rather function in order to express his naïve, sincere, and straightforward character, paradoxically separating him from National Socialism as a result.

A trend in the German society from 2000 and onwards has been to specially consider how to portrait the characteristics of *John Rabe* in Nazi films. A film is entertainment and art, but it is also a sort of mass media. It has been often pointed out that a film has contributed to making a national consciousness; hence the phrase “national cinema”⁽⁷⁾. On the other hand, we really also feel often that there is a gap between a current social condition and a modern national consciousness such as a film the mass media have contributed to making. However that may be, it does not mean that the social framework of the nation-state has become extinct. We must also emphasize that the framework is as stable as ever and that films have contributed to making a national consciousness as they did before. In Germany, from the 1990s, the trauma of the Nazis, which has always existed in a German society, combined with the national cohesion based on the unification of West and East Germany and the transnational or international dissolution based on immigration and formation of the European Union. In tensions between the cohesion and the dissolution, therefore, the representation of the nation-state became complicated in layers.

The German films from 2000 and onwards reflect this social consciousness. Today, when people praise something transnational or something international, especially because of the trauma of the Nazis, it has been hard for nationalism to come out noticeably. However, in the 2000s, the German nationalism appeared as a “good German national” in films with the use of transnational or international settings as disguise, or as a convincing explanation. The film *John Rabe* is the most typical work among the films

(7) Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema*, pp. 1–7.

that have this national tendency.

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