

From the Testimony of Jan Burke on the Making of a Nazi Propaganda Film in Theresienstadt

In August-September 1944, the Nazis produced a propaganda film about life in Theresienstadt. The purpose of the film was to show the world a false image of life in the Ghetto. The Ghetto residents themselves were forced to produce the film and to play in it. Kurt Gerung, The Jewish actor and film producer from Berlin, who was a prisoner in the Camp, was made head of the Jewish production team.

The following is a testimony of a prisoner in the camp about the making of the movie:

Q: Do you remember the day that this film was shot?

A: Sure I remember. It was already crazy. They planted two thousand rosebushes. Two thousand rosebushes, you know? You know what that means in a ghetto?

Q: And what did you think when they planted these roses?

A: I think the world gets crazy. And then they built, for instance, in the parks, you know, where you have a drawing of...I mean, there were parks left. They didn't cut the trees. We didn't need the wood. So they built little huts for children and then what we say in Czech "hopachke", you know, where you....how do you call it?

Q: You swing yourself.

A: Swings, and then I knew there would be an inspection and then we get a little bit more food, you know, like it was...for us it was an advantage. But anyway, you know, there was even, when they showed to the Swiss inspection the ghetto, they stopped at the library, at the post office, but the driver was an SS one in civil clothes, you see? He was not in uniform, the driver, for the Swiss. Everything was SS, but they would show the sports field - you have seen all those films, you know. Some people didn't want to participate, but they told them quick to do it, otherwise they will be

transferred. Even after they participated, they sent them all on transport, not to have witnesses, you see? So it was already, that was the end, to participate. And there was a famous man from the "Three-Penny Opera", Kurt Gerong, you know, like Lotte Lenja and Weill - he was also working on the scenario because he was very known to the Germans from the cabaret from Berlin so he participated. Afterwards, Auschwitz. I met him in the camp. For me, you know, I was small, but I knew the "Three-Penny Opera", you know, the music.

Source: Yad Vashem Archives, VT-1341