

Aus dem Nichts

Fatih Akin's movie is the first German feature film that addresses the NSU phenomenon. The script is based on actual events with a considerable amount of dramatic license. The provocative ending brings the terror acts and the German justice system back into focus but also raises many questions about the vigilante justice portrayed in the film.

On June 9, 2004, a NSU nail bomb exploded in front of the hair salon of Özcan Yildirim in the Keupstrasse in Cologne. Twenty-two people were injured, some severely. The narrative that Akin creates is based on this event, but in the movie the nail bomb that the Neo-Nazi terrorist Edda Möller places on a bicycle in front of the Tax and Translations Office kills the German-Kurdish immigrant Nuri Sekerci as well as his son. Sekerci's German wife Katja (played by Diane Kruger) survives.

Many of the details and inferences that Akin weaves into the narrative will resonate with anyone familiar with the history of the NSU. For instance, Katja almost immediately suspects Neo-Nazis as perpetrators while the police waste precious time investigating former friends and acquaintances of her husband. Reports in the media that portray this attack as nonpolitical mirror the attitude of many real newspapers and TV stations during the eleven year long terror spree of the NSU.

When the suspects in the movie are apprehended and put on trial within a few months, the German justice system seems to function well, in stark contrast to the actual span of seven years from the real bomb attack in Cologne in 2004 until the suicide and *Enttarnung* of the terror cell in 2011. And unlike the trial of Beate Zschäpe that dragged on for five years, the evidence in the movie trial seems clear and solid. Katja saw the terrorist placing the bomb in front of the store. But just as the bomb attack occurred '*Aus dem Nichts*', the aggressive defense lawyers manufacture doubts '*Aus dem Nichts*'. They foster doubts about the key witness by virtue of a mysterious fingerprint on the garage door where the bomb was made as well as by invoking a fake alibi by a Greek Neo-Nazi.

The outcome of the trial sets off a desperate act of revenge by Katja Sekerci that confronts us with a provocative political statement. While the loss of her husband and son drives this woman into depression and a suicide attempt, the failure of the justice system catalyzes her anger into action. This portrayal of a female avenger is rather unusual in screenplays and suggests a dangerous dynamic lurking within the modern *Rechtsstaat*, which by definition is a society where vigilante justice simply cannot be tolerated.

Akin's visceral treatment of the subject reflects a widespread anger and frustration over the loss of nine innocent immigrants and one policewoman as well as the inability of German law enforcement agencies and political leaders to cope with such violent extremism. Perhaps the controversial ending inhibited the movie's chances to win the foreign film award at the Oscars. Who knows? In any case, the aforementioned dangerous dynamic, condemned by some and championed by others, will continue to haunt the consciousness of every government, whether *Rechtsstaat* or *Unrechtsstaat*.

THE GERMAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Friday Film Fest Series



Aus dem Nichts

By Fatih Akin

October 12, 2018

• 6:30 PM •

Film, Food & Discussion

The German Society of PA

611 Spring Garden St.

215-627-2332

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Aus dem Nichts (In the Fade) (2017)

Director: Fatih Akin
Screenplay: Fatih Akin, Hark Bohm
Production: Fatih Akin, Melita Toscan du Plantier, Marie-Jeanne Pascal – Bombero Int., Corazon Int.
Distribution: Warner Bros.
Music: Josh Homme
Camera: Rainer Klausmann
Editor: Andrew Bird
Year: 2017
Length: 106 Minutes
Cast: **Diane Kruger** as Katja Sekerci
Denis Moschitto as Danilo Fava
Johannes Krisch as Haberbeck
Ulrich Tukur as Jürgen Möller
Samia Chancrin as Birgit
Numan Acar as Nuri Sekerci
Rafael Santana as Rocco Sekerci
Awards: **2018 Golden Globe – Best Foreign Language Movie**
2018 Critics' Choice Award – Best Foreign Language Movie
2017 Cannes Film Festival – Best Actress Award: Diane Kruger
Commentary: Karl Moehlmann



About the Director



Fatih Akin was born in 1973 in Hamburg to parents of Turkish origins. He attended Hamburg's College of Fine Arts to study Visual Communication, graduating in 2000. Akin has been married since 2004 to German-Mexican actress Monique Obermüller and lives in Hamburg-Altona.

He made his debut as director in 1998 with *Kurz und schmerzlos*. His feature films include *Im Juli* (2000), *Wir haben vergessen zurückzukehren* (2001) and *Solino* (2002). His fourth feature film in 2004 *Gegen die Wand* (*Head-on*) was a major success and received several

prizes, among them the Golden Bear award at the Berlin Film Festival and the Best Film and the Audience Award at the 2004 European Film Awards.

Subsequent works included *Auf der anderen Seite* (*The Edge of Heaven* 2007), *Soul Kitchen* (2009), *Der Müll im Garten Eden* (*Polluting Paradise* 2012) and *The Cut* (2014). In 2017 Akin won The Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Movie for *Aus dem Nichts*, which deals with the National-Socialist Underground or

NSU, an organization which terrorized Germany from 2000 until 2006 with anti-immigrant killings, bombings and bank robberies.

Der Terror der NSU

After the fall of the wall in November 1989, right wing extremist groups emerged in East-Germany, coalescing from various cities of the former GDR. The violence against foreigners and asylum-seekers intensified in the summer of 1991 with the firebombing of a refugee center in Hoyerswerda near Dresden and culminated in August 1992 when xenophobic riots broke out in Rostock-Lichtenhagen. It was in this climate that Uwe Mundlos, Uwe Böhnhardt, and Beate Zschäpe became radicalized.

They formed a group called "Kameradschaft Jena", espousing Anti-semitic and anti-immigrant convictions and adopting a slogan of "Bratwurst statt Döner". Beginning with fake bombs that they deposited around Jena, they soon moved on to accumulating real bombs and explosives. After the police raided their rented garage in January 1998, the trio fled to Chemnitz and disappeared into the underground with the help of right-wing elements there.

The first murder of an immigrant occurred on September 9, 2000, when the Turkish flower merchant Enver Slemsek was gunned down in Nuremberg. In the following six years a total of nine immigrants were murdered in Nuremberg, Hamburg, Munich, Rostock, Dortmund, and Kassel. Finally, on April 25, 2007 German police-woman Michele Kiesewetter was killed in Heilbronn. Along with these murders, the group, which now called itself *National-sozialistischer Untergrund* or NSU, chalked up 15 bank robberies.



The NSU's reign of terror ended on November 4, 2011 when Mundlos and Böhnhardt were cornered and killed themselves in a trailer in Eisenach. Beate Zschäpe surrendered to the police four days later. Zschäpe was put on trial in Munich in May of 2013 for complicity in the killings and robberies. On July 11, 2018 she was finally convicted and sentenced to *lebenslanger Haft* after one of the longest and most expensive trials in German history.

Many questions and *Ungereimtheiten* remain. Why couldn't the police find this terrorist cell for 11 years, and why couldn't the killings and bombings be stopped earlier? According to one investigating committee, one of the cardinal mistakes was the reluctance of police to look into the Neo-Nazi networks and groups as possible suspects. The role and efficacy of government agencies as well as individuals have been called into question as well, for instance the *Verfassungsschutz*.