

# *Divided Sky*

Directed by Konrad Wolf

1964



The film *Divided Sky* is based on Christa Wolf's breakthrough novel published in 1963. It was produced in Germany and released in 1964. The action takes place between 1959 and 1961. The pressing problems of that period of time, like issue of choosing between one and the other German state, issues of democracy, individual liberty, the painful and sordid past, are discussed in the film. Two storylines interweave as well. From one side, these are problems of that time, from the other side - a love story of Rita and Manfred which have been split by the Berlin Wall.

*Divided Sky* tells the story of Rita Seidel, a woman in her late twenties, looking for love and understanding in the GDR. She comes back to her childhood village after a nervous breakdown and recalls the last two years of her life when she was in love with Manfred, a chemist who was 10 years older. As to Manfred, he was a man of specific temper. He lived with his parents, called his house a coffin because nothing happened in his town and had difficult relationships with his father. Manfred was disillusioned with life in East Germany and decided to move to the West. Rita followed him, hoping to persuade him to go back, but realized that he would never do that. Rita is reconciled with the past and decides to focus on her work.

Well, this is the story of a young woman trying to understand the socialism in which she lives. The film narrates the story of post-war country where the destructiveness and devastation rule, Germany is divided by the Berlin Wall and people are frightened as well. This tense situation is depicted through industrialization. In the center of the film there is a retrospect love relationships set around the construction of the Berlin Wall. The director shows the separation of the East German population after the building of the

Wall. *Divided Sky* represents the political realities of post-war Germany and also shows people's lives changes due to the construction of the wall.

The film *Divided Sky* is considered to be an existential movie. This means that the question about the meaning of existence is central one. Rita's story can be existentialist because she is facing a global in the terms of her life problem - she has to make a life-changing decision, either she goes with her beloved man or stays in her native part of the country. She has to define her place in this world. The reason behind this is her relationships with Manfred. The film is less about her choice than it is why she makes that choice. Alienation is one of the leading concepts of the film. Rita experiences this alienation from Manfred and the entire world. It turns out that Manfred and she had different world-views. He does not want to live in East Germany; he supposes that in West Germany his talent will be recognized. This is the main factor to Rita's distancing from him. She thinks that they will be unhappy together. This is not easy for her and it hurts Rita a lot.

*Divided Sky* is an East German drama film directed by Konrad Wolf and starring Renate Blume as Rita and Eberhard Esche as Manfred. I really enjoyed the cast. First of all, the exceptional performance of Renate Blume has to be mentioned. She played very persuasively. Renate is very sincere and she managed to represent Rita's feelings in the proper way. As to Eberhard Esche he also played his role very well but actually I did not like him, not because he was not professional enough or badly performed, but rather because I considered him to be a negative character. He preferred career to love.

This movie is supposed to be the guidebook of socialist realism. The main message of *Divided Sky* is to show the political situation of Germany after World War II as well as people's difficulties in rebuilding of their lives. The construction of Berlin Wall made things worse. Behind this lies the story of doomed love, as the main character leaves her girlfriend in search of better life. It is a combination of so-called contemporary movie (it tells the story

about specific time in past) and the documentary. Furthermore, this film is considered to have a significant informational value and at the same time it is revived by the love story between Rita and Manfred. The director excellently develops the plot by beginning with the retrospective. Such plot twists as back and forth in the movie timeline makes this film even more vivid. People cannot deal with national identity. The director realistically screened the factory worker. This portrayal clearly shows the social situation of people and their hard lives. The resentment, anger, bitterness, rivalry and jealousies among people are depicted as well. The industrialism is strongly presented in the plot, there are a lot of plants, factories, chimney stacks, drains everywhere. Cityscapes dominate. It has to be mentioned that in order to articulate the interpersonal conflicts typical of the GDR the director used a modernized language. As to the music it is fine and soft with some notes of jazz written by Hans-Dieter Hosalla. Well, I think that the setting, lightening and music have been used appropriately in every scene.

I think that the intended audience can be mostly everyone. But those people who are interested in world history will appreciate *Divided Sky* the most. They will benefit from watching it because they will learn the political situation in Germany, they will see how people lived, what they felt and how they related to the world they had to survive in. The director as well as cast did a great job. Even though sometimes the plot seems to be dull, it is very powerful film depicting a lot of special features of this devastating country. Well, some people might not enjoy the film but *Divided Sky* is not supposed to be a relaxing movie. It might certainly bore someone, but for the connoisseurs of history and literature it is undoubtedly worth seeing.

From the first glance, some of the plot twists might seem confusing because little was said about why Manfred has left Rita. But with the story unfolding we find out that she refuses to follow her beloved because she needs to stay in East Germany, it is her place, she has a sense of duty. I also did not like that the director used a lot of jump cuts switching back and forth in time without narration of the events. It made me feel confused sometimes. I think this is the

only film's drawback. Turning to advantages I would like to mention that *Divided Sky* has a strong historical plot, generally the plot can be easily understood.

The director managed to convey right atmosphere of that period of time. The scenes are sometimes dull and too industrial but I realize that they exactly show state of affairs in Germany after World War II. *Divided Sky* is highly thought-provoking movie. First of all, the undivided love made me meditate a lot after having watched the film. Secondly, the political situation of this country, people's destinies, life changes, suffering are the things which made me feel sorry for them. Germany witnessed a complicated and harsh time. For almost two hours of *Divided Sky* duration I was filled with characters' pure love, their grieves and losses, disappointment and reconciliation with destiny. To be honest, I liked this film, the plot is very interesting even absorbing. Even though, it has been produced in 1964, I was on the edge of my seat the whole time.

Well, every man to his taste but I thoroughly recommend this film to everyone who is interested in history and literature because to my mind not everyone can properly understand this movie. *Divided Sky* has its specific target audience which will definitely appreciate this film as it keeps in suspense until the very last minutes.