

## PRESS KIT

# Das Deutsche Volk

Ein Film von  
Marcin Wierchowski



Kamera **Marcin Wierchowski**, **Peter Peiker** Dramaturgie und Montage **Stefan Oliveira-Pita** Colorist **Stephan Wagner** Zusätzlicher Schnitt **Silke Botsch**, **Bert Schmidt** Schnittassistent **Alexander Kempkes** Komposition und Musik **Louisa Beck**, **Kaan Bulak** Ton Postproduktion **Andreas Lucas** Sound Design **Matz Müller**, **Ole Ohlendorf** Sound Supervisor **Rainer Heesch** Dialog Editor **Hendrik Jurich**, **Paul Ziesche** Mischung **Hendrik Jurich**, **Paul Rischer** Produktion **Marcin Wierchowski**, **Pola Sell**, **Dorothea Braun**, **Kurt Otterbacher**, **Julius Theis** Buch und Regie **Marcin Wierchowski** Redaktion **Katya Mader**, **Sabine Mieder** Grafik **Stephan Bundi**  
Eine milk&water Produktion in Koproduktion mit strandfilm, ZDF/3sat & Hessischer Rundfunk gefördert durch Hessen Film & Medien

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## **THE GERMAN PEOPLE**

**A film by Marcin Wierchowski**

Germany 2025 | 132 minutes

Languages: German, Romanian, Turkish, English (OV w/ engl. subtitles)

### **Logline**

On the night of February 9, 2020, a racist attacker shot and killed nine young people in Hanau, leaving behind mourning families and survivors who fight not just for their lost loved ones but also for truth and justice. Director Marcin Wierchowski accompanies them for four years as they take an untiring stand to ensure the attack is not forgotten – and poses the pressing question once again: Who belongs to Germany and who doesn't?



## **Synopsis**

On the night of February 9, 2020, a racially motivated attack in Hanau cut nine young people's lives short. An ordinary evening ended in a nightmare for their families, friends and an entire city.

DAS DEUTSCHE VOLK ("THE GERMAN PEOPLE") recounts the story of the crime from the perspective of bereaved friends and family and those who survived the attack. It shows the pain and rage a crime of this nature causes and the long shadow that it casts. What immediate and long-term consequences did the attack have on these people and Hanau? And what does it say about Germany?

Director Marcin Wierchowski accompanies the victims' loved ones as they navigate grief and loss, documenting their struggle for justice, their calls for acknowledgement and their determination not to be treated as second-class citizens. They expose the structural racism expressed not only in the crime itself but also how they are treated by the authorities.

As politicians search for the right words and many questions regarding the crime go unanswered, those left behind set out to find answers themselves. Together, they reconstruct the events of the night of the attack, endeavor to ensure it is not forgotten and demand consequences. As time passes public awareness wanes, yet the families continue their fight: a fight for justice, a fight to remember those who were murdered.

DAS DEUTSCHE VOLK poses the pressing question once again: Who belongs to Germany and who doesn't?

## **DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT**

**Marcin Wierzchowski**

I was born in Poland. As a child I came to Germany. I grew up in a similar part of town as the victims of the attack and experienced racism when I was little.

The question of why some people feel superior to other people has accompanied me my whole life. My family history has been shaped by the era of National Socialism. People in my family were murdered by the Nazis, sent to camps to do forced labor and terrorized by the occupying forces. NS ideology defined Poles as “subhuman,” and a label like that leaves an indelible mark – on both sides.



Hanau is only a few kilometers away from the city I now live in. When the news broke that nine young people had been murdered there on February 19, 2020, it quickly became clear to me that it had to have been a racially motivated attack. Hanau is a city that is home to many people with immigrant backgrounds. Moreover, in 2020 strong anti-immigrant sentiments were prevalent in the media and society in general and right-wing populist parties were gaining



support. Not even six months had passed since the attack in Halle, the NSU murders had still not been properly addressed and a neo-Nazi had shot and killed CDU politician Walter Lübcke in Kassel.

After the attack on February 19, 2020, I immediately began filming. I quickly became acquainted with the victims' families and the survivors of the attack. It was at the same time as the first COVID lockdown and most journalists left the city. I stayed in Hanau throughout all of lockdown. The families met regularly in a small store, and it was there that I was able to gain their trust and convince them to be protagonists in my film.

I accompanied the victims' families and survivors both with and without my camera for nearly five years and experienced their worst stages of grief. This allowed me to observe the effects an attack like this has on those left behind, on the survivors and on a city like Hanau over an extended period of time, and what it ultimately means when people feel superior to other people.



## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

### **Marcin Wierchowski**



Director and producer Marcin Wierchowski was born in Warsaw in 1984. His parents fled Poland and emigrated to Germany due to the civil-war like conditions in Poland; Marcin was still so little he fit in his mother's hand-bag. Wierchowski quit school at 17, when he began working in a video store, watching innumerable movies and decided to be a director. He went back to school to get his Abitur in 2012 and then began studying philosophy in Frankfurt am Main. In 2013 he moved to the Kunsthochschule Mainz to study fine arts with a focus on film under Professor Harald Schleicher. He now lives and works in Frankfurt am Main and Warsaw. His debut film, the 47-minute documentary HANAU – EINE NACHT UND IHRE FOLGEN ("HANAU – A NIGHT AND

ITS AFTERMATH"), won the Grimme Award and is the basis for his 2025 feature film DAS DEUTSCHE VOLK ("THE GERMAN PEOPLE"), which will premiere at the 2025 Berlinale. The Film- und Medienstiftung NRW awarded him a Gerd Ruge Grant for production of his documentary film project TRAUMALAND ("TRAUMA LAND"). He is a director, author, video artist, set designer, producer and is currently working on his first works of fiction while continuing to make documentary films.

2023	POLAND ON THE BORDER (60')
2022	I AM BURNING (35')
2021	HANAU - A NIGHT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES (53')
	Adolf Grimme Prize
2021	THE HANAU ATTACK (32')
2018	INVENTUR DES VERFALLS (7')

## BACKGROUND

The attack in Hanau on February 19, 2020 was one of the worst racially motivated acts of violence in Germany. The perpetrator, Tobias Rathjen, a 43-year-old right-wing radical, targeted and killed nine people with immigrant backgrounds at two crime scenes. The murder victims were: Gökhan Gültekin, Sedat Gürbüz, Said Nesar Hashemi, Mercedes Kierpacz, Hamza Kurtović, Vili Viorel Păun, Fatih Saraçoğlu, Ferhat Unvar and Kaloyan Velkov.

Tobias R. then killed his mother and himself. The perpetrator had a past marked by mental disorders, a belief in conspiracy theories and radicalization through right-wing extremist ideologies. He was legally allowed to own a gun although he had repeatedly drawn the attention of authorities with paranoia-driven criminal complaints and aggressive behavior. This was due to the authorities' failure to sufficiently vet his mental health and his extremist tendencies.

The emergency dispatch center was not available the entire night of the crime, and a locked emergency exit at one of the crime scenes kept several victims from being able to flee. It was the victims' families themselves who brought these failings to the public's attention. The SWAT team that stormed the perpetrator's house the night of the crime was later disbanded because half of its officers were active in right-wing extremist chat groups.





The victims' family members and survivors decry the insufficient support of government agencies and the inadequate efforts to critically address the traumatic events. No press conference was held and months passed without any information being divulged about the course of events. The victims' bodies were seized without consent and some families were not told the whereabouts of their children's bodies until a week later. Two weeks after the crime the police called some of the families and warned them not to undertake acts of retribution against the perpetrator's father. That destroyed the last shred of trust they had left in authorities. What's more, they were traumatized further by the behavior of the perpetrator's father, who shares his son's ideology. He played down the murders and publicly insulted the victims. He continues to live mere meters away from some of the victims' families.

The social and political reactions were varied. Although memorial services were held in many places, the families of the victims and civic initiatives demanded efforts be made to more effectively fight racism, the structural failures of government authorities and right-wing extremist networks. There were discussions about stricter gun laws as well, but many of the measures were wanting. This case shows how deeply rooted structural racism is in government agencies and authorities. Five years after the crime the families continue to lament the lack of consequences and demand a comprehensive tribute to the victims and an honest debate about the responsibility of the state and society.





## ABOUT INITIATIVE 19. FEBRUAR HANAU (19th of February Initiative)

(Text on the founding of Initiative 19. Februar Hanau, March 6, 2020;  
Source: <https://19feb-hanau.org/>)



Following the racially motivated murders on February 19, 2020 in Hanau, we made a promise to one another at vigils, rallies and funerals: that the victims' names shall not be forgotten; that we would not abandon one another; that we would not leave it at dismay without consequences. The cameras and politicians are leaving the city now. We are staying. We are founding an initiative to provide a permanent forum in which we can express solidarity and continue making demands for clarification and political consequences. We will not allow February 19, 2020 to be swept under the rug like the many right-wing murders that preceded it. Nor will we allow the culprits to be protected yet again and the violence they perpetrated to be downplayed.

There must now be direct support for those affected, access to legal advice and experienced lawyers, psychological counselling and help for moving house, financial aid and independent investigations. And this is about more than that: in recent days young people and adults in Hanau have been talking a lot about their everyday experiences of racism – in schools, day-care centers, at work and on trains. There needs to be space and trust for those discussions too. No forgetting, no silence, no fear! We want to create that space with everyone who needs it, here, locally.

We are creating a space of trust. We want political solidarity and visibility. We stand for a pluralistic society. Hanau is our city, our home. That's how it is and how it will remain. The relatives, families and friends of the victims and the injured are here. They must be heard. We will bolster one another in the coming weeks, months and years. And we have to ensure that there are consequences – and that nothing will be forgotten.



## **CREW**

Writer & Director	MARCIN WIERZCHOWSKI
DOP	MARCIN WIERZCHOWSKI, PETER PEIKER
Dramaturgy and Montage	STEFAN OLIVEIRA-PITA
Colorist	STEPHAN WAGNER
Additional Editing	SILKE BOTSCH, BERT SCHMIDT
Editing Assistant	ALEXANDER KEMPKE
Composition and Music	LOUISA BECK, KAAN BULAK
Sound Design	MATZ MÜLLER, OLE OLENDORF
Sound Supervisor	ANDREAS LUCAS, RAINER HEESCH
Dialogue Editor	HENDRIK JURICH, PAUL ZIESCHE
Sound Mix	HENDRIK JURICH, PAUL RISCHER
Production	MARCIN WIERZCHOWSKI, POLA SELL, DOROTHEA BRAUN, KURT OTTERBACHER, JULIUS THEIS
Editorial Board	KATYA MADER, SABINE MIEDER
Graphic Design	STEPHAN BUNDI

**A milk&water production in co-production with strandfilm, ZDF/3sat  
and Hessischer Rundfunk, funded by Hessen Film & Medien.**



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