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A Generation

By Bohdan Czeszko

A GENERATION:

SCREENPLAY BY:

ARTISTIC SUPERVISOR

DIRECTED BY:

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY

IN THE ROLE OF "STACH"

I was born here in the slums,
on the outskirts of Warsaw.
I grew up in poverty.
Here I made my first friends
and had my first lessons.
I often had it rough as a kid,
because I couldn't tell
my friends from my enemies.
I was too trusting and relied
on my swift legs and strong fists.
My ma kept me on a short leash
and tried to push me off to work.
But I took it as
typical woman's nagging,
preferring to play knives
with my buddies instead.
I knew some tricks.
I was good at throwing
the knife off my cap.
But Kostek was even better.
He could make that knife do anything.
But that wasn't our only occupation.
In 1942, supplies for the German army
were transported east by train.
I'd toss coal down off the train.
Felt like a real patriotic thief.
Kostek!
We've gotta get Zyzio!
What do you want?
Trying to pinch my coat?
What time is it?
No watch, eh?
Weren't there three of you
prowling around this brickworks?
- Wait a sec.

- What?
Weren't you working the trains?
Here.
What?
Come on.
Come on, move it.
Don't be afraid.
I used to steal too when I was young.
Hey, Grzesio!
Two stiff ones, your highness.
That'll put you
back together in a jiffy.
I was wounded too,
back in '39, at Modlin.
I've got a scar to prove it.
Mr. Grzesio.
More of your lewd behavior?
What's with you?
Getting ready for a bath?
A beer.
Watch it.
Careful with the boy.
He's wounded.
Then why are you making him drink?
Vodka's antiseptic, isn't it?
Ah, it's Comrade Sekula.
Having his Saturday pale ale.
Who's the kid, Grzesio?
That should be looked at.
He's going to faint.
Time, gentlemen!
Curfew. We're closing.
Get him out of here.
There'll be trouble.
What's your name?
Stach.
Stanislaw Mazur.
Who got you?
The blackcoats.
One day you'll really get it, my boy.
You'll swallow a bullet.
Won't know how or why.
The foreman mentioned
he's looking for apprentices.

Maybe him.
Mom.
Jesus!
Did Zyzio Koscielniak come back?
Has Kostek been here?
He didn't even ask about me?
Why are you crying?
I'm alive.
My arm will get better.
I'll find work.
Mom, for Christ's sake!
It'll be all right, you'll see!
It'll be all right.
Sure.
In my grave.
- Apprentice?
- Yes.
Go on in.
Good morning.
Apprentice?
Don't just shake your noggin.
Answer when you're spoken to.
Yes.
Really?
Good for you.
Sit down over there
and wait for the boss.
Good morning.
Hey, Grubecki.
Had a rough night?
- Yes, smuggling tobacco.
- And?
Scared the hell out of me.
Can you wangle me
a quarter of a pound?
Sorry.
I only work wholesale.
Get your butt off that bench.
You don't sit there.
It's not the latrine.
Go jump in a lake.
- Good morning, Sekula.
- Hello.
Well, Jasio, here's the new apprentice

to replace you.
It's about time.
I qualified almost a month ago.
Eh, Stach!
Don't sit on the workbench, Stach.
We don't do that around here.
Good morning.
Let's go.
Here to see me?
This is the boy, sir.
He'll work out.
How should I know?
Come here.
His eyes are a bit too keen.
You haven't got itchy fingers, have you?
Who, me?
Who else? Me?
You in good health?
You have papers?
- Yes.
You'll bless my name one day.
Now go give it your best.
Work hard.
Good morning, Rysio.
Good morning, Waldzio.
Mr. Sekula,
please ask Mr. Ziarno
to come in here.
Jacek!
Show him how to make stretchers.
Put some muscle in it, boy.
Where's the receipt?
Signed with a code name.
How do I know the money
ends up in the right hands?
Ask the major
when you get a chance.
What about that arsenal
you've set up in the shop?
Get that damned junk out of here!
I've already conveyed your demands
to headquarters.
I want some peace.
Cash for the organization? Fine.

But get those guns out of here.
I don't want to hang on your account.
Waldzio, Lieutenant Hirschweg is here.
Bunks for the barracks.
Not bad at all.
What do you think, Lieutenant?
They don't look very comfortable.
We use only the best materials.
Here you are.
Top-quality.
Back to work!
More glue, damn it!
Hey, boy!
Hurry up!
Where's the damn glue?
Boy!
Get some more glue
from the storeroom.
Bring that glue
or I'll kick your ass!
Glue, damn it!
What glue?
We knock off in a minute.
Can't you lay off the kid for a sec?
Here. Get back to work.
Quitting time!
Take it easy, men.
This isn't a streetcar.
Let a man wash, you filthy bums.
You must work hard, my boy!
Work hard!
Good night.
Work and pray,
and you'll grow a hump!
Leave him alone, Dad.
They really ran you ragged today, eh?
I did that for -
Yes, it's been four years.
And no one helped me.
Don't look at me like a whipped pup.
I'm not gonna help you.
Fend for yourself.

Remember :

Stay out of trouble.
Rely only on yourself.
That's what I've been doing,
and look at me.
I'm a journeyman now.
I was just as grimy then
as you are now!
Now back to work.
Well?
Not bad for a beginner.
But a bit too much off the bottom.
Make it strong so it'll last,
for you and for me.
All right.
Let's nail on the trim.
"Give it a lick and make it stick. "
Cigarette?
Berg's building a new shop.
He's buying machines.
Business is good.
He's spending a lot, isn't he,
Mr. Sekula?
That's right.
Where does he get it from?
The Germans, or what?
Is it from the Germans?
You'll only get burned
accepting anything from the Germans.
We give it to him.
Us? Really now, Mr. Sekula.
We've been giving for ages, Stach.
But it won't be much longer.
It's simple arithmetic.
How long did it take you
to fit those doors?
Two hours.
And what's your weekly pay?
Thirty-six zlotys.
So you take home six zlotys a day?
And Berg charges 12 zlotys
for fitting one door.
It takes you two hours to do the job,
so your day's pay is covered
in one hour.

He gets 12 for one door?
Twelve divided by two is six,
and six zlotys is a day's pay for me.
So in fact you work eight hours
for the price of one.

Right?

Let's go on.

Supposing you spend all your time
fitting doors.

You do four a day.

Berg gets 48 zlotys for them
and pays you six.

So he's making 42 zlotys off you,
day in and day out.

Off you, off me, off all of us.

Day in and day out.

There once was
a wise bearded man...

by the name of Karl Marx.

He once wrote

that workers
were paid just barely enough
to renew their strength.

These days we don't even get that.

We have to scrounge to survive.

Can't we workers do anything?

If you only knew, my friend,
how much blood has been spilled
over this simple arithmetic -
among other things.

Workers fight for their rights.

They always have.

What about now?

Even now.

Mr. Sekula,
you say the workers are fighting.

What about you?

What about me?

Well... do you... you know...
fight?

You...

What?

Listen, my boy. We've established
that we're both workers,

so call me by my name.
Don't call me mister.
The "misters" around here
have all fled the country.
Hell, I gotta run!
- Where to?
- School.
Berg says I've got to attend.
Says it's mandatory.
So I go... but not often.
- Skipping classes?
- Well...
Don't do it, Stach. Study.
What kind of school can it be
if the Germans allow it?
It is what it is.
Don't waste your chance.
Don't be a smart-aleck.
Learn wherever you can.
In these sad times,
our Catholic faith,
refuge and mainstay for us all,
ought to shine in our souls
with special strength.
Because we know
neither the day nor the hour
when only our faith will remain
of the things we now possess.
I'd like to get to know all of you.
I'm going to ask a simple thing.
I'd like someone to recite
the Apostles' Creed.
You, perhaps.
Jacek, isn't it?
The Apostles' Creed.
I believe in God...
I believe in God...
I believe in God...
You can do it.
I don't know it.
I can learn it if I have to.
On your papers
there's a box marked "religion. "
Doesn't it say "Roman Catholic"?

- Yes.

- Well, then?

- What?

So tell me about your religion.

There's a box for it. You fill it in!

Class is over!

Stop, friends!

We've got something to tell you!

Wait!

Friends!

Friends, the Union of Fighting Youth

is being formed,

the combat organization

of Polish youth.

We will not lay down our arms!

We have blood, tears

and destruction to avenge.

And now,

not sometime in the future!

They murder us!

They send us to rot in camps!

Let's take revenge!

Let's fight for a free Poland!

For a just Poland!

Young workers, make contact

with the Union of Fighting Youth!

Join the People's Guard,

the militant arm of the Polish people!

Don't wait to be liberated!

To arms!

Death to the occupiers!

Miss! Miss!

Hey, you! Listen!

That's not her.

"Make contact. " But how?

"Make contact. "

Nice words.

But just try to do it.

There was no one to help me.

I groped in the dark a long time

before I found a friendly hand.

Clear out!

"Clear out," and we scatter.

That's right, brother.

That's right.
They slap our faces
and we do nothing.
We take it like sheep.
If only we had guns.
What? Guns?
So long.
That piece in the storeroom
was calling out to me.
That would be a start.
I burst with pride thinking
I could join them already armed.
Their eyes would pop
out of their heads.
What are you
tinkering with there, Stach?
A chest for my tools.
When I went in the army,
I had a tool chest too.
A painted one.
A recruit's chest.
That was in the czar's day.
I was stationed
at the Manchurian border.
Nothing but mountains and steppes.
You could breathe freely then.
I was young in those days,
and strong as an ox!
It felt like if I just got
a solid footing,
I could carry the world
on my shoulders.
I bet you feel the same now,
young man, eh?
Where are your dogs, Krone?
The boss gave them to the dogcatcher.
He turned me out
and gave my dogs to the dogcatcher.
You see, Stach...
this is my last day here.
Tell me, how does a man live
without work?
Old age isn't treating you well, Krone.
You'll be old one day too.

Not that I wish it on you,
because I've taken a liking to you.
But as it was, so will it be.
Come now.
Not necessarily.
Sekula!
What's up?
Quick, I'm in a hurry.
There was a meeting at school.
A girl spoke. I ran after her.
She stood up on a barrel and spoke.
- What are you babbling about?
She told us to join
the People's Guard.
I want to join.
Hold on now. Slow down.
Sekula, I know you can help me.
I don't have time right now.
Meet me Sunday at 11:00.
- Where?
At the Bem-Wolska crossroads.
You got that?
But not a word to anyone.
If they ask about me at the shop,
you know nothing.
I'm not going back to the Bergs.
- Really?
I'm coming, Szymon.
You said there was a girl?
And what a girl!
Well, so long, Stach.
See you on Sunday.

Don't forget:

You didn't see me. So long.
There were two boys with her.
I ran after them,
but they vanished like ghosts.
Right.
We have to notify Kaczor.
I'll do it now.
- Christ, it's her!
- Take it easy.
Hello, Dorota.

I'd like you to meet this young man.
A new recruit,
and not a bad one, I believe.
Time will tell.
What shall we call you?
Tiger? Panther? Poppy?
Animal, vegetable or mineral?
This is no laughing matter.
Give me an ordinary human name.
You have a bit of the country about you.
I'll call you "Bartek. "
Then Bartek it is.
Well, so long, kids.
Stay well.
Please, not "kids. "
Take my arm or something.
Do you know what the People's Guard is?
Our Workers' Party?
You know who it is
you want to join?
I do.
Well, maybe not exactly, but -
Please don't laugh.
But I feel it.
I'm not laughing. You may make
a good member of the guard.
You remember where we're to meet?
Yes.
Till tonight, then, at my house.
WAIT FOR ME. I SHALL RETURN.
My name's Bartek.
Kaczor.
The Germans say,
"Rder mssen rollen fr den Sieg. "
"The wheels must roll for victory. "
It's up to us to stop those wheels
from rolling eastward.
Paralyzing the enemy's
troops and transport
is our most important task.
They say there's only a handful of us.
But we don't care
what those people say
who turned our country

over into the hands of criminals.
We are the soldiers
in the great army of the people
fighting the Nazi invaders
in the sacred cause of freedom.
No one ever stands alone
in a just war.
The Red Army is with us.
I'm using big words,
but you and I know
how to translate those words
into everyday work for the resistance.
The stone walls of the city
are our battleground.
With pistol in hand
we'll roam that battleground.
And to those who say we're mad,
we'll tell them,
"Even so, it's the way it must be.
There is no other way. "
They're having fun.
Saying good-bye to the day.
I have a friend named Janek,
but I'm not so sure about him.
And Jacek - he doesn't believe in God.
And I've known Mundek since childhood.
I just ran into him again by chance.
Good, Bartek. You can form a squad
of the people you know.
Stand at attention, comrades.
You're going to take an oath.
Attention.
"I, antifascist son
of the Polish people, hereby swear...
to fight valiantly
and with all my strength...
for the freedom of our homeland...
and the liberation of our people. "
Hey, do you know
what the People's Guard is?
I'm gathering some guys together.
Will you join us?
No.
I can't.

The boss gave my father the sack.
"Too old," he said.
"Can't cope any longer. "
I have to feed my father.
If I got killed,
he'd have to go begging.
No, I can't.
But don't think
I'm just trying to weasel out of it.
No one's forcing you.
Join us if you like.
If not, keep your mouth shut.
Don't worry.
I'm a communist too.
You're a fool, not a communist.
Better be careful what you say.
A communist!
Communists fight!
Get a move on, girls!
Gate!
Be careful at the gate.
Gate!
Inspection.
- They already checked in the yard.
- This is my fifth time around! You know me!
Don't tell me my job.
Look, I'm in a hurry!
Time is money!
Money!
Hey, come.
Come to the commander.
You, come.
Come in!
Gustav - to the bunker.
He tried to steal some planks, sir.
Yet another thief!
Nothing but thieves.
I don't steal!
The guard made a mistake.
A German made a mistake?
Polish swine!
Gustav!
There's so many!
Anyway, one or a hundred,

it doesn't matter.
I'm dead just the same.
The fatherland.
You agreed to it,
and you know full well why.
Anyway, they won't go off by themselves.
There's no danger.
Where's the boss?
That's the last time
I'm escorting one of your transports!
I've had enough!
They beat you.
Who was it?
Just a moment.
Damn it.
I'll make it up to you.
I'm not taking money for this.
He'll pay for this.
Beating up one of our own!
And not just him. I've seen his doings.
He's a bastard!
- They worked you over?
- Feels like they did.
Stay out of this.
It wasn't you who got beat up.
He would have licked his wounds
and asked for more.
Enough!
Nobody asked you, so keep quiet.
We had a talk
some time ago, didn't we?
That was a long time ago.
Is that right?
I'm not gonna be a dog
and stand by doing nothing
while they work somebody over.
And I'll have a word with you
some other time.
All right, all right.
He goes to Auntie Walercia's place.
We'll jump him there and get his gun.
With what?
The safety's on.
Stop fiddling with it.

You don't know what you're doing yet.
Well? What about it?
- I'm for it.
We'll use another gun
to teach him a lesson.
We'll cut him down to size.
We'll just see
if I don't know what I'm doing.
- Let's let the bastard have it.
- Wait here.
Two beers.
How many?
Enough?
Good-bye, lady.
Hands up.
Show them.
A clean job.
He was there,
she was here, and I was -
Damned cowboy!
The woman screamed, you say?
They always scream.
When I was in the czar's army...
Be quiet, Dad.
On the Manchurian frontier...
Dorota...
She supplied us with pamphlets
and guns.
She gave us advice.
My respect for her collided
in my thoughts
with a longing to stroke her hair.
I gradually stopped thinking of her
as our political mentor.
More and more it was simply
her name in my thoughts.
It'll be curfew soon.
There's still time.
Let's talk.
You don't work until later tonight?
You know what he's singing about?
Love.
Like a real human being.
I'd better go.

There's time. Let's talk.
We never get the chance.
Dorota...
What?
We got us a gun.
Very good.
There was a shooting.
Janek killed a Werkschutz.
- What?
- In a caf out near us.
A German. A Volksdeutsch.
He beat people.
Did you tell anyone beforehand?
No. That's why I came.
About time.
There was no chance
to talk to you.
Have you gone mad?
To do a job in your own area?
Where they see you every day?
It was irresponsible.
It's against the basic rules
of the underground.
It's curfew time.
We'll discuss this later.
And he called me a damned cowboy.
Want to know
how it really happened?
He said, "Hands up,"
and I stood by with the gun.
Suddenly there was a scream...
and that was that.
Jerry crumpled like a sack of flour.
You're an idiot!
What do you know?
Attention!
Attention!
This is Dorota,
the political officer for our area.
- You mean, the "officeress. "
- Not bad.
I said attention.
Stop talking.
Come on. You trying

to impress her at our expense?
Well... at ease, then.
We've heard a thing or two about you.
Seems you're a good shot.
You captured a pistol.
May I see it?
Careful. It might go off.
Filthy as an old rag.
You have to take care of a gun.
You know what it takes to get one.
Five minutes of sweat,
and fast legs.
Our organization is a combat group,
not a gang of gunslingers.
See?
We're not concerned about the Jerries.
We're concerned about you.
We want you to retain
your humanity through all this.
You have to keep your cool.
And get used to the idea that our weapons
are nobody's private property.
What do you want of me,
for Christ's sake?
I hate all this.
The Germans,
this damned war and all of you!
I don't want to kill!
The thought of it turns my stomach!
To hell with all of it!
The ghetto rose up today.
I've come to say good-bye
to you, Dorota,
and to my boys.
We must help our Jewish comrades.
Bartek, it's up to you
to keep discipline.
You must be ready
for my call at any time.
You will be needed.
Well, see you, boys.
Take care, kids.
Gentlemen!
Have you heard?

The Yids have actually started fighting!
Why do you have to be so stupid?
What was that?
What did you say, little brat?
See? This is no laughing matter.
Men are dying, Mr. Ziarno!
When they're done with the ghetto,
they'll put the screws to us.
You shut him up in a flash.
What a swine, that Ziarno.
A real swine.
We need more than just talk.
There's a job to do.
We've gotta help the ghetto.
You coming with us?
Me?
You took away my gun.
I'm unarmed.
I'm just a nervous civilian.
No, I can't do anything.
Abram.
There's an uprising in the ghetto.
Did you come from there?
Someone was to meet me here,
but I was delayed a few hours.
They didn't wait.
I walk the streets and people stare.
That's right.
Your looks, you know.
So I've come back to my old place.
To you.
But I see...
Well, yes...
but what can I do?
You see?
I'm just a civilian.
What can I do?
"It's your looks. "
You're right.
Stay out of it!
You're a journeyman now,
not a hero.
Where is he?
Smoke from the burning ghetto

poisoned the city air
and hung like a heavy cloud
over the carnival
built by the Germans
just outside the ghetto walls.
Sekula's urgent call reached us
from somewhere in that flaming quarter.
Jasio had turned up again
unexpectedly.
I just couldn't figure that boy out.
I'm coming with you.
What are you staring at?
If I don't join you, you stare.
If I do, you stare all the same.
Make up your damn minds.
Of course I'm glad, my friend.
Very glad.
Where are we gonna get a car?
I'm not too worried about that.
Here comes Kaczor.
You have lovely legs.
Come on, move over.
It's a hell of a bumpy ride!
My belly's empty.
That drop of water I drank today
doesn't count, I hope.
If you're hit on a full stomach,
you've had it.
Hurry up, comrades!
Watch out!
Go!
Along the wall! Run!
In the name of the Father...
Come on!
Go! Go on!
Halt!
Quick!
Is that all of them, Sergeant?
It's empty.
What about the pistol?
It's not there.
That's strange.
How can that be?
Did it just vanish?

Perhaps one of you gentlemen
borrowed it.
Who else knows
about the hiding place?
With respect, sir, no one.
But men come in here for supplies.
Why do you let them in?
The boss didn't want
to arouse suspicion.
Stop talking nonsense, Sergeant!
You must realize your responsibility.
There have been cases of arms
belonging to the organization being sold.
- There are communists in this workshop.
- Sergeant.
We'll discuss this in the office.
Better clean up this mess first.
And stop bothering me
with your talk of communists.
- Where's Janek?
- Not back yet.
Probably gave himself up
and is naming names now.
This is bad.
- You better get out of here.
- Glue!
If anything happens here,
I'll let you know.
Found an odd job in town?
Need a partner?
Forget it.
Don't you know what's going on?
There's something not right with that boy.
Something's a bit off.
Politics, Mr. Zelazowski.
They start them early these days!
Where are you off to?
My mother's ill.
What are the tools for?
You going to plane off her hump?
It's good you're here.
Jasio's dead.
Jesus.
We must go now.

What do you want from him?
Acting like you have a right
to bother people in their own homes.
Isn't it enough the Germans harass us?
Now our own people too?
This isn't right.
What's all this?
What do you want here?
You know damn well.
Stop playing dumb.
They barged in
and turned the place upside down.
Who are they? Germans, or what?
The police?
Rats looking for Jews to sell?
I don't know who they are.
Nowadays, scum breeds like rabbits.
- This is Ziarno, from our shop.
- Mr. Ziarno.
Mr. Ziarno.
I don't know the other one.
We're soldiers of
a Polish underground army.
You'd better tell me
where the pistol is that you stole.
What pistol?
Did you sell it?
What do you want from him?
Stach?
I don't know what they want.
A man breaks his back working
and lives on rations,
but even at home
they won't leave him in peace.
Go fight the Germans.
What do you want here?
Did you go into the storeroom?
I was sent in.
There.
There what?
Everyone goes in there.
You've spent hours there yourself.
The truth now. Did you sell it?
Who, me?

Some people trade in guns.
I don't.
He's in tight with the communists.
He used to be pals with Sekula
when he worked at our place.
I'm friends with those
who are kind to me.
I've never heard a civil word from you.
Now you want me to pay
for your own shady affairs.
Look for a scapegoat somewhere else.
That's all I can say.
Look here, friend -
Antoniowa, lend me -
Sorry.
Bad timing.
Call the neighbors.
These hooligans are bothering us!
I'm off!
Franek!
Kazio, quick!
Antoniowa's in trouble!
Men, come here! Bandits!
Well? Gonna start shooting?
Just try it.
You won't get out of here alive.
We're not the kind
to frighten easily down here.
Jesus!
Don't let those bastards off the hook!
Beat the crap out of 'em!
Well, Mr. Ziarno...
you've had it,
as far as I'm concerned.
I'm in trouble now.
Hopelessly in trouble.
Ziarno's gonna have his eye on me.
They know where I live.
You can't put other people in danger.
You've got to go underground.
You'll get false papers and go under cover.
But where?
What about here for now?
Comrades tell me

that after the recent arrests,
I ought to change address too,
but I'll wait a while.
I've gotten used to my little place.
Listen, Stach.
The group meets tomorrow
at the brickyard.
This is the sign.
The passwords are,
"Do you sell down feathers?"
"Yes, I sell down feathers. "
You'll meet our new boys
and take over as platoon leader.
Really?
You're a strange one.
Comrades say you're brave,
yet you're such a child.
Me brave? I get scared.
Very scared.
When I think how I too
may be shot before this is over
and never live to see my future...
And how, if I got killed...
I'd never see you again.
We've got a big job ahead of us.
When it's over, every holiday
will be like a fairground.
Bright lights and music,
and dancing all the way.
Could it be just our imagination?
Could it be it's easier to die
for the cause than to live for it?
My real name is Eve.
I'll be damned.
It is worth fighting for.
It is worth living.
It is worth living.
It's curfew time.
You can't go out in the street.
Good morning.
Yeah? What's so good about it?
You're an early bird.
What can I do for you?
Let me have a rye loaf.

Maniek, be quiet in there or else!

Oh, God. The milk!

What a life!

- Give me half a pound.

- Certainly.

It all started

when my husband got run in.

Business dealings, you know.

He wasn't careful enough.

You know how it is now.

I don't have enough to bail him out.

The police are all leeches.

Here you are.

It's no life without a man.

Let me have those sunflowers.

Here you are.

Hey, mister.

Gestapo!

Do you sell down feathers?

Yes.

I sell down feathers.

THE END:

SkyFury