

# Peterborough Arts Cinema

Films that make you think

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> February at 7:30 pm

**Land of Mine** (2015) Denmark  
**Under sandet (original title)**

R | 1h 40min

**Director;** Martin Zandvliet

**Stars;** Roland Moller, Louis Hofmann,  
Joel Basman

In 1945, in Denmark, after the defeat of Germany, the tough veteran Sergeant Carl Rasmussen is assigned by Lieutenant Ebbe Jensen to defuse and remove 2.2 million mines in the Danish West Coast to make the beaches safe.

Carl receives a group of teenage Germans prisoners of war to clear mines. With the formal promise of Ebbe, Carl tells to the youngsters that when the task is accomplished, the survivors would be released to return to Germany.

Nominated Oscar Best Foreign Film.



**An Interview with Martin Zandvliet** by Masha Leon

**How do you reconcile your film's portrayal of the humanity of the Danes as rescuers of Jews with the brutality against the teenage German boys forced to detonate mines along Denmark's shoreline?**

Martin Zandvliet: I've always been interested in the history of Europe and the Second World War—of Denmark portraying itself as a helping rescuing nation, which is also true. There are many stories that need to be told, [like] about the fishermen who helped the Jews flee to Sweden. Not many people know this, but the fishermen made a lot of money on this. It wasn't just a gesture of goodwill. I wanted to tell that we were not just good Samaritans, [but] that we were also human. What to do with that hate afterwards toward the Germans [is] a dilemma: Is payback OK?

**There's the Christian imperative of forgiveness. Did your family suffer under Nazi occupation? I am a Holocaust survivor. During my escape from Nazi-occupied Warsaw as a child I faced a firing squad where half the victims were shot, yet I was later helped by a German soldier who warned my mother and me how to avoid the patrols.**

My father was part of the Resistance. My grandfather hid guns. I want people to remember the past—not just much about how the Germans treated the Jews or how terrible World War II was [in terms of its horrors]. It's not about forgetting the past; [at the time it] was OK to hate the Germans.

**But these boys were the youngest German combatants commandeered at the end of the war, who had been indoctrinated by the Nazis, then brutally treated by the Danes, forced to detonate some two million mines which the Germans had embedded along Denmark's beaches.**

At the beginning Denmark was not sure whether they were with the Germans or the Allies. Churchill called [the country] Hitler's little [canary birds](#). People don't call me patriotic because I am criticizing. I mean, the Danish people built the bunkers, they built the mines. A lot of people made money on the war. The German boy mine diffusers were called "volunteer prisoners," forced to walk out on the minefields. In my mind an "eye for an eye" mentality does nobody any good.

**You mention that the British were complicit with the Danes in changing the categorization of these "prisoners of war" into "volunteer prisoners." Wasn't there a volunteer pro-Nazi Dutch Volksarmee?**

Oh, yes! I am half Dutch; my father is from Holland but born in Germany. My mom is from Denmark. When I was 3 my father left and went to Germany, made a new family, brothers and sister. When we were in a bar in Copenhagen and I presented them as my German family, someone started "Heil Hitler"-ing. It was not funny. My ending is my hope for humanity....and was meant to tweak your emotion.

Edited by Alex O'Reilly



