

The Counterfeiters
2007/Certificate 15

Synopsis of the film

The Counterfeiters tells the true story of 'Operation Bernhard' a major counterfeiting operation set up by the Nazis. Salomon Sorowitsch, known as 'Saly' is an expert counterfeiter. His skills help to fund a life of pleasure until he is arrested for fraud. Saly is thrown into a concentration camp and classified as a criminal but the Nazis need his exceptional skills. He and other skilled prisoners are forced to take part in a counterfeit operation to flood the British and American economies with fake banknotes. Saly and his fellow prisoners have to decide whether to assist the Nazis or risk their lives by stalling or even sabotaging the whole operation.

When it was made and where

The Counterfeiters or *Die Falscher* was made in Austria in 2007.

HMDT Review

Please note that the review may act as spoilers for the film.

We are recommending this film because it tells **Untold Stories** about the spectrum of experiences from Nazi concentration camps. It reminds us how the Nazis divided and exploited people. The film makes us think about moral courage and decision making in the face of adversity. Many Holocaust related films tell of events at Auschwitz-Birkenau but this film's focus on Mauthausen and Sachsenhausen reminds us that this was not the only Nazi camp.

The main questions in *The Counterfeiters* are linked with issues surrounding collusion and survival. The prisoners are faced with moral choices. Initially Saly exploits the vanity of his guards by using his skills in portrait painting to immortalise them in exchange for small privileges and extra rations, later he and fellow prisoners have to decide whether they should save themselves by assisting the enemy or give up their 'privileged' status as special prisoners and face starvation, degradation and even death alongside the other captives in the camp.

Issues to be aware of

The dialogue of *The Counterfeiters* is in German with English subtitles. There are some violent scenes, hence the film's 15 certificate. The film also draws attention to divisions amongst prisoners, although most of these were set up by the Nazis some tensions are seen to develop between prisoners from different social backgrounds. At one point a former bank worker says he does not want to work with a criminal.

You can use HMD resources to find out more about life in the camps <http://www.hmd.org.uk/genocides/the-holocaust/life-in-the-camps> which **may** be helpful in exploring some of the issues raised by this film.