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ThyssenKrupp Blues

a film by pietro balla/monica repetto

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synopsis

Carlo, 30 years old, is a blue-collar worker at ThyssenKrupp Acciai Speciali Terni. He lives and works in Turin, where he moved from South Italy.

In April 2007, the German executives of ThyssenKrupp decide to dismantle Turin's plant and on the 11th June, Carlo receives the letter announcing his immediate lay-off. He and his companions organize various demonstrations and have a meeting with the mayor and union representatives in an attempt to block the closure of the factory and to denounce the complete lack of controls and maintenance at the plant and the lack of respect for the workers.

But the struggles of workers lead to nothing.

On July 4, while all the city is celebrating a big event, Carlo invites his friend Melita to dinner and in their conversation he looks back at his life. Carlo tells Melita that he doesn't have enough money to survive in Turin and that he has to return to his family in Calabria. To the feeling of having been used by his employers is added the possibility of parting from a beloved one.

Suddenly, the company put off the closing of the plant to the end of the year calling back Carlo to the working lines. The workers must work long exhausting shifts in order to preserve their right to severance pay. They are forced to work in unsafe conditions because maintenance of the machines had been stopped in April.

Chronicle of a death foretold: during the night between the 5th and 6th December, the Turin plant becomes a living hell. Flames burned alive seven workers who were working the night shift on line five. Carlo was saved because he had worked the afternoon shift that day.

Now the workers, to whom earlier no one would listen, were splashed on the front pages of newspapers and on Television.

The factory in Turin closes permanently and Carlo, again with no income, returns to Calabria. His journey becomes a search for identity and for his place in the world. Calabria, with its people and its nature, becomes a mythical place where a man, shaken by anger, the terrible tragedy that killed his workmates and the media chaos in which he is caught after this dreadful accident, tries to find himself.

directors' note

We started to shoot this film on May 1, 2007. We were looking for the main characters for a documentary about the life of workers today. We met women and men who often did not have a specific political belief. They told us about their loves, dreams and weaknesses. They were different from the image of unite "class" we were used to.

This is the way we met Carlo.

We could not imagine that death would have marked Carlo's life for ever.

THYSSENKRUPP BLUES can speak for a tragic society, where working can mean dying. It is a story made of loneliness and neglect that concerns all of us. The dissolution of Carlo's workplace happened in a tragic way and got a lot of attention in the media.

Carlo is a young man that lives in northern Italy and has worked for seven years for one of the best-known German industrial groups in the steel industry. He is an unknown hero of a hard daily life. Inside and outside the factory, he looks for his identity and struggles for a living. We wanted to show the tragedy of his everyday life, but it was stricken by the violence of a fire that put an end to the lives of seven workers, destroying their families and friends. This tragedy changed Carlo's life forever. It changed our film too, leaving us more and more alone. We don't want to shoot a film like this anymore.

pietro balla/monica repetto

the main character

carlo 722775

Carlo Marrapodi, 31 years old, is a former worker of ThyssenKrupp Acciai Speciali Terni. His number at work was 722775. Carlo is the sixth son of a funfair proprietor from Pazzano in Calabria, a region in South Italy. He left Pazzano when he was only 16 years old to pursue his dream of becoming a theatrical player. He went to Milan where he joined some small and "alternative" theatrical companies. Here he also met the Italian poetess Alda Merini who gave him an alarm clock as a present. He moved to his brother in Germany a few time later because he needed more money to survive. From the beginning of 2000 to December 5, 2007 he worked at the ThyssenKrupp's plant in Turin. During these seven years in Turin he entered a theatrical company too. His life has been divided between factory and stage up to the spring 2007. In April 2007 the executives of ThyssenKrupp decided to close Turin's plant. Carlo and the other workers are compelled to choose between transfer or dismissal and start to protest. They looked for the cooperation of Trade Unions, Turin's Mayor and the regional administration to prevent the plant from closing and, above all, to denounce the lack of safety measures in their workplace, but, in June, Carlo receives a written dismissal notice. When the company put off the closing in autumn, Carlo and less than 200 workers out of 400 came back to work in Turin. They worked until December 6, when the tragedy occurred. After the disaster, Carlo is laid off again. Now, he earns a miserable wage and had to leave his house in Turin. He lives in Calabria. Immediately after the tragedy, he started to receive an invitation a day from TV programs. Once a person recognized him in the street and said, "Hello Thyssenkrupp!" This made his blood run cold.

interview with carlo marrapodi

When and how did you learn about the closing of the plant?

It was in January 2007. I was talking with a truck driver who used to take us wood. He finished to unload the wood, shook my hand and said, "good luck boys." I thought he was going to retire. The truck driver said that he was not going to retire, but that he had heard that our plant was going to be closed. I asked to a manager if it was true and he said, "Carlo, did you find a new job to live in Calabria?". I understood everything.

The plant was completely neglected. The trade unions started to do something in June, when the first strike was organized. You had a meeting with Turin's mayor – Chiamparino – the vice-mayor and the trade unions' representatives. What do you remember about that day?

Chiamparino reassured us. He had talked with the firm's delegates. After the meeting, I was on the tram with some of my colleagues. One of them received a phone call, someone said there was a list with the names of the layoffs. When we arrived to the gates of the plant they confirmed us that 150 workers would be laid off. I used to earn 1400/1300 euros per month. Now the State gives me a charity of 735 euros.

What did you do during the months of layoff?

I have lived in my town in South Italy for four months. It was my mother who paid my expenses, as she used to do when I was 15. I had to ask her the money to buy cigarettes. It is hard because I am not a lazy person. In October, ThyssenKrupp's bosses decided I had starved enough and called me back to work. The last people who came back were me and some other hotheads. What I saw in the plant when I came back was incredible. That place had become a pigsty during those four months.

They dismantled the plant during the entire month of October, while about 150 people were working at the lines...

They were taking away machines, rolling mill and real pieces of the building. There were dismantling sites and cranes. We continued to work a few yards away from them. A lot of colleagues found new jobs. I became a stand-in. I replaced everybody, even when I was unable to do the job. Some who used to work at the finishing mill were working at the rolling mill. We had only one foreman per shift in the factory. There were half the workers than before.

What were ThyssenKrupp's executives planning to do after the final closing of Turin's plant?

They wanted to move all of us to Terni. A real deportation. It was normal for the company to send us to Terni like they sent nuts, bolts, strips and other pieces of the plant. I am not a piece of their plants. I am a man who is building up his own life. I can spend eight hours a day working for them and this is right, but I did not sell my life to them!

When was the final closing scheduled?

The closing was scheduled at the end of September, then they said it would be in April, maybe in May. I did not know for how long I would get my salary. Some said that there is no difference with 300 euros less. Actually, 300 euros makes the difference between surviving or not for a blue-collar worker.

What do you remember about the last months working for ThyssenKrupp?

I remember about November in that sucking place. It looked like hell even before, but then it was incredibly worse. People worked in the strangest places. I had to work in the place the most far away from the other workers. I was the one responsible for packing. This is where I had begun, what those who are unable to do anything do. I worked alone 8 hours a day, without seeing anybody. There was nothing to pack. So I used to go where the others worked stupidly. That day, on December, 5 I went to the working line number 5 to talk to Toni.

chronicle of a death foretold before and after december 6, 2007

1:00 am on Thursday December 6, 2007 at a steel factory in Turin: a fire started at line 5, where the full-hot metal is cooled. The incident looks like a scene from hell, with people becoming fire torches in a few seconds. Colleagues of the victims cannot do anything to help them, as fire extinguishers fail to function. One of the seven workers involved dies immediately, the others will anguish in hospitals for some time, with 90 or 95% of their bodies covered with burns. By the end of December they are all dead. When the incident occurred, the seven workers of the plant owned by the transnational steel giant ThyssenKrupp had already completed their regular shift of 8 hours and were working 4 hours overtime. Actually, the company was gradually dissolving the factory, with the enterprise due to close in two months time. Part of the people initially working at the factory were going to be relocated, while the remaining people were supposed to get compensation from a redundancy fund for two years and later to switch to a mobile employment scheme. According to what workers said, the company was no longer interested in the plant and recently stopped paying attention to the enterprise, workers and their conditions. Workers could not refuse overtime because that meant to put at risk their jobs.

Three days after the tragedy, ThyssenKrupp's executive board declare in a press bulletin that the plant respected safety measures, On February 23, 2008, the judicial authority closes the investigation. More than 100 infractions to safety measures were reported officially. The indictment sees, among the other things, the managing director of ThyssenKrupp Acciai Speciali Terni charged of voluntary manslaughter. In June, the relatives of the victims were asked to take a very difficult choice. They decided to accept the 12 million 970 thousand euros the German company offered to pay them. 35 people will benefit of this money. They agreed to renounce to take proceedings against the company in the trial.

The first preliminary hearing against ThyssenKrupp's top managers was held in Turin's court on July, 1 2008. In the hearings of July, 1 and July, 23, the Region of Piedmont, the Province and the Municipality of Turin took proceedings against ThyssenKrupp together with about 80 of their workers. The seven workers of line 4, who were the first people who tried to help the victims of the rogue, were among them. They were assisted by trade unions' legal representatives.

They all want to know the real cause of the death of Antonio Schiavone, 36 years old, Roberto Scola, 32, Bruno Santino, 26, Rocco Marzo, 54, Rosario Rodinò, 26 and Giuseppe Demasi, 26.

We will have to wait until September, 26, when the next preliminary hearing is scheduled. Attorney Guariniello said, "we hope the preliminary hearing will end soon. The compensation for damages is only a secondary question in the trial. We have to assess if there are criminal liabilities."

the thyssenkrupp company

The ThyssenKrupp AG industrial group is the result of the union between two German leading companies in the steel sector, Thyssen and Krupp, which merged at the end of 1990s. The two companies were founded in 1811 (Krupp) and 1891 (Thyssen). Both companies expanded their activities throughout the 19th century and during WWI and WWII thanks to the manufacture of armaments.

The Krupp's expansion is due to the work of Alfried - son of the founder Friedrich - who has been known as "the Cannon King" since the company began to make steel cannons in the 1840s. By the late 1880s the manufacture of armaments represented around 50% of Krupp's total output.

When Alfred died, twenty thousand people worked for Krupp - making it the largest industrial company in Europe. At the time, the company was headed by von Bohlen und Halbach, husband of the Krupp heiress. When Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, the Krupp works became the center for German rearmament. In 1943, by a special order from Hitler, the company reverted into a family holding, and Alfried, son of Gustav and early member of the Nazi party, took over the management. After WWII, the Nuremberg Military Tribunal convicted Alfried as a war criminal for his company's use of slave labor. It sentenced him to 12 years in prison and ordered him to sell 75% of his holdings. In 1951, the authorities released him, and in 1953 he resumed control of the firm.

While the Krupps' company was family owned, Thyssens' company has become a holding since 1926, when it merged with three others steel companies. Fritz Thyssen headed the company at the time. Thyssen funded the Nazi party too, but broke away with the Nazis later. He left for Switzerland, but was arrested and confined in a concentration camp. The rebuilding of the Thyssen group after the Second World War is supported by his wife Amélie Thyssen. In September 1995 Fritz Thyssen's grandsons announce their withdrawal from the company. Since the two heirs left the supervisory board of Thyssen AG, no descendants of the company founder have been involved with the company.

At present, ThyssenKrupp is one of the world's biggest technology groups with more than 190,000 employees worldwide working in the Group's main areas of steel, capital goods and services.

the directors

pietro balla

He was born in Poirino, near Turin on 06/15/1956. Since 1985, he has worked as a station-master and has created documentary and TV programs for the Italian public network and for satellite channels (e.g. Publomania for Rai 3, Supergiovani for Rai 2). Since the beginning of '80s he has investigated the blue-collar workers problems through documentaries, shorts and reports. His short films and documentaries have won various prizes in some of the foremost national film festivals (e.g. Illibatezza, 1949 nelle terre di Dio and Dérive Gallizio.) He directed the docufictions I campioni di Olimpia (Arte, History Channel) and Casa Pappalardo (Rai 2)). He authored produced the four-episode series Black Shoots aired on Fox Crime (SKY) and presented by Michele Placido. During the last year he co-directed the documentary Factory (Rai 3) and was involved in the development and production of the documentaries "Cocaina" and "La vittima e il carnefice", both produced by H24 for Rai 3.

"ThyssenKrupp Blues" is its first full-length film.

monica repetto

She was born in Rome on 06/11/1965. She is a journalist and a film critic. She began to make shorts, documentaries and TV programs in the '90s (e.g. "Camerini ardenti", "Panico Jodorowsky", "Dérive Gallizio", and "Loves in Flames".) She founded an independent production company - Deriva Film - with Pietro Balla in 2002. She co-authored the docu-sitcom "Casa Pappalardo" for Rai 2 in 2003. Director and independent producer, in the 1990's Monica Repetto authored several television programmes and docufiction projects (e.g. Casa Pappalardo aired on Rai2, Destinazione Serie aired on Canal Jimmy.) She directed and produced the documentary The True Story of Marianne Golz (Fox International Channels Italy, History Channel) in 2007. She co-authored and produced the tv programme Black Shoots, which was aired on Fox Crime (Sky) and presented by Michele Placido.

She co-directed and produced with Pietro Balla the documentary Factory (Rai 3). At present she is working on a historical documentary about Falck's still mills in Sesto San Giovanni, produced in collaboration with Rai Educazione.

"ThyssenKrupp Blues" is her first full-length film.

filmography

pietro balla

- 1985 *Ai confini della realta'*, doc regia/director
- 1986 *3 febbraio 1960*, doc autore/author
- 1990 *Mortus est mai pi barbota*, cortometraggio/short regia/director
- 1990 *Kamikaze bum bum*, cortometraggio/short regia/director
- 1990 *Zilioli blues*, cortometraggio/short regia/director
- 1991 *Ladro di biciclette*, cortometraggio/short regia/director
- 1992 *Costanza*, cortometraggio/short regia/director
- 1994 *Illibatezza*, cortometraggio/short regia/director
- 1995 *Mariano Laurenti: l'occhio ridens vede nudo*, doc regia/director
- 1996 *Camerini ardenti*, doc regia/director
- 1996 *Fiat c'eravamo tanto amati*, doc regia/director
- 1999 *Amateurs*, doc regia/director
- 1999 *Agathae, 3 giorni di fuoco e devozione*, doc regia/director
- 2000 *Amateurs 2*, cortometraggio/short regia/director
- 2000 *1949 Nelle terre di dio*, doc regia/director
- 2001 *Dérive Gallizio*, doc regia/director
- 2002 *Amori in fiamme*, tv serie/tv series, regia/director
- 2002 *Ballando nel fumo*, doc regia/director
- 2002 *Guarda che luna, omaggio a Fred Buscaglione*, musical, regia/director
- 2004 *I campioni di Olimpia*, docufiction, regista/director
- 2005 *L'odore della gomma*, doc regia/director
- 2006 *Scatti di nera*, tv serie/tv series, regia/director
- 2008 *Operai*, doc regia/director

monica repetto

- 1995 *Mariano Laurenti: l'occhio ridens vede nudo*, doc regia/director
- 1996 *Camerini ardenti*, doc regia/director
- 1999 *Amateurs*, cortometraggio/short regia/director
- 2000 *Amateurs 2*, cortometraggio/short regia/director
- 2000 *Panico Jodorowsky*, doc regia/director
- 2000 *Dérive Gallizio*, doc regia/director
- 2001 *Star rom*, doc regia/director
- 2002 *Amori in fiamme*, tv serie/tv series, regia/director
- 2004 *Deep Throat To You All*, doc regia/director
- 2006 *Scatti di nera*, tv serie/tv series, regia/director
- 2007 *La vera storia di Marianne Golz*, doc regia/director
- 2008 *Operai*, doc regia/director
- 2008 *Falck, romanzo di uomini e di fabbrica*, doc regia/director

credits

directors **pietro balla/monica repetto**
filmmakers **francesca frigo/andrea parenà**
editor **eleonora cao**
addictional editor **francesca vaschetti**
sound **stefano grosso**
executive producers **deriva film** **pietro balla/monica repetto**
executive producers **esperia film** **giuliana del punta/bruno restuccia**
executive producer **babydoc film** **enrico giovannone**

cast

carlo marrapodi/melita giambrone/rocco carniccio/cekoschi carniccio/mario marrapodi/salvatore interdonato/callisto fiorenza/massimiliano tassone

production **deriva film**
coproduction **esperia film/babydoc film**

running time **73'**
year **2008**
country **italia**
standard **dvcam pal**

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