

THE FILM SEMINAR AGAINST AUSTERITY PRESENTS

## THE MUSICAL SHOT IN THE ARM!

We are showing the film in the original English version with German subtitles subtitles.

Introduction and following discussion  
with Soli Moxon (Department for  
International Students at the AStA)



CAST STARS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

DIRK BOGARDE PHYLIS CALVERT JEAN PIERRE CASSEL JOHN CLEMENTS JOHN GIELGUD JACK HAWKINS KENNETH MORE  
LAURENCE OLIVIER MICHAEL REDGRAVE VANESSA REDGRAVE RALPH RICHARDSON MAGGIE SMITH SUSANNAH YORK JOHN MILLS

PRODUCED BY  
**BRIAN DUFFY and RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH**

- Teilnahme kostenfrei -

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**On 10.12.2025, 8 pm in Lecture Hall D of the Philosophenturm (Von-Melle-Park 6)**

# „Oh! What a lovely war“

A film by Richard  
Attenborough  
(GB, 1969)

Can someone who is prepared to switch off their brain at the sound of a roar, murder people from behind and die for hollow phrases such as “freedom”, “democracy” or “fatherland” be a hero? If it were up to the imagination of the arms industry, the media’s armchair generals, and the grand coalition of conscription and war-enabling advocates in the country, then yes. The historical experience of two equally “unwanted” but strangely prepared, started and lost world wars teaches us the

opposite. The time is long overdue to finally draw the right conclusions from this.

A history lesson like the one offered by British director Richard Attenborough’s satirical anti-war film “Oh! What a Lovely War,” released in 1969, is just what we need.

Originally conceived as a stage play, the work uses soldier songs that became popular in Great Britain between 1914 and 1918 to contrast the glaring contradiction between the euphemistic propaganda and the reality of World War I.

While the great European ruling houses—who know each other and engage in family intrigues—have professed their love of peace, their war mobilizations are already in full blast. Publicly, the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand is enough for them to begin their deadly game with their subject armies. To get them to participate, the battle of nations is staged like a fairground attraction. With pomp and glory, the lure of a quick victory and the possibility of glorious service on the “field of honor,” millions of volunteers are recruited. Among them are the sons of the Smith family. However, when the first offensives stall, the facade quickly begins to crumble. Wounded war veterans returning home disturb the image. Songs of perseverance are needed, while social contrasts become increasingly apparent, even in the army.

When the situation on the battlefield reaches a stalemate and the disillusioned ordinary soldiers begin to fraternize with their equally miserable “enemies” on the other side of the

*“Humans are useful creatures because they serve to drive up petroleum stocks through the deaths of soldiers, increase the profits of mine owners through the deaths of miners, and also serve culture, art, and science.”*  
Kurt Tucholsky, “Der Mensch” (Human Beings), 1931.

trenches, they are fired upon by their own artillery. All the whitewash of the “common cause” for freedom, the people, and the fatherland is shattered. The generals and the domestic war profiteers want victory at any price. They count on the population figures as human material. Hundreds of thou-

sands are sacrificed in senseless attacks. The initial euphoria turns into bitter sarcasm and biting mockery of the betrayed against the betrayers. News of mutiny and revolution reaches the British soldiers from afar. For the Smiths, it is too late. With the signing of the armistice, their last son also dies in the field. He is one of millions who, as the final song intones, did not understand until the very end where the front line actually lies.

With impressive image montages, great acting performances, factual narratives, and biting humor, this dramatically choreographed film transforms from a cautionary historical document into a deeply enlightening plea to put an end to all preparations for war—whether ideological or material—once and for all.

Peace is to be won, not war. It is the priority issue for all those who do not benefit structurally from misery, oppression, inequality, and violence. Pacifism as a militant stance for the civil development of a globally humane and joyful existence is the only meaningful lesson from the history of two world wars that is worthy of personal generalization. Humans are rational beings. And those who can laugh do not need heroes.

Therefore: International solidarity – end austerity!

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