

TRUTH UNVARNISHED, GUILT UNGILDED

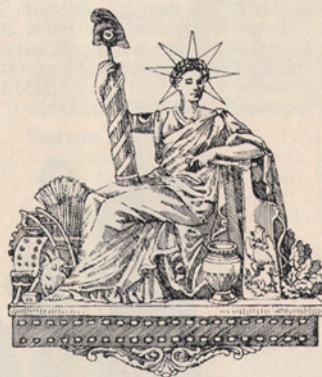
"... *The Sorrow and the Pity* reminds us that monsters had, however briefly, inherited the earth in the name of national good..."

To each nation its own moral prophylaxis. For us it is the fiction, as in "Let's Not Be Nasty to the Mafia" (at least not by name), or in turning *The Damned* into "The Darned" when it is bowdlerized for television. For the French it is the documented fact that must be kept from the "masses."

In France, television wants no part of *The Sorrow and the Pity*, an extraordinary documentary about Nazi-occupied France written by Marcel Ophuls and André Harris and directed by Ophuls, the son of the late great Max. The two worked on it as reporters for government-sponsored television but were dismissed after the strike and student riots in 1968. They finished the film in 1970—but French television refused to run it and it was only through the reported intervention of François Truffaut that they were able to find a small offbeat theater in which to show it. The film was an instant popular success and moved on to several Parisian theaters; it was bought for showing on Swiss, German, Dutch, Belgian, Hungarian and Swedish television and shown at the last New York Film Festival. Now, through Cinema V, it is available to us—and must be seen.

One understands the official French aversion to this four-hour-and-twenty-minute (plus intermission) compilation of present-day interviews, newsreel clips, photographs and memorabilia of the 1940-44 occupation and, most important, soul-probing questioning and soul-searing responsive revelations that strip a people to their very being and therefore touch upon the universal possibilities of reaction to time of crisis. It is not a nice picture, on a national level, that emerges, with the truth the smasher of myth and the camera a revitalizer of what, after 31 years, too many prefer be forgotten. France was indeed the one occupied country whose government collaborated with the Nazis—and excelled even them in atrocity.

Let me cite, out of context, the sequence that undoubtedly prompted my use of the word "prophylaxis" in the beginning. At one point, René de Chambrun, in an ardent defense of his father-in-law Pierre Laval, puts forth



this Vichy ruler as a buffer against the Nazis, a protector of his people and even the Jews. The film cuts to the biologist-writer, Dr. Claude Lévy, whose statistics belie the claim and who tells of the Sports-Palace roundup of Parisian Jews. The Gestapo had ordered the deportation of only those over sixteen, but the zealous gendarmes collected 4,100 children as well. No arrangement had been made for their deportation and a Protestant pastor asked Laval to intervene. "It's of no importance," the Premier replied. "I am practicing prophylaxis." None of the children survived. Only 5 per cent of France's Jews did.

Ophuls's film, divided into "The Collapse" covering France's rapid fall and its reasons and "The Choice" dealing with the Resistance and other reactions of the people, is subtitled, "Chronicle of a Town During the Occupation." The town (recognizable from *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*) is Clermont-Ferrand, an industrial city 242 miles from Paris, in the Auvergne near Vichy, where the Resistance started in 1942-3. It is through its people—thirty years older, remembering often only what they choose to, with documentary evidence to support or demolish the memory—that we learn of those who collaborated, those who resisted, those who remained indifferent. A "bourgeois" pharmacist, sur-

rounded by his now-grown children, recalls his "sorrow and pity" at the country's collapse, the search constantly for food, his weeping at the inhumanities; a farmer who was in the Resistance reports that at their first secret meetings they sang "The Internationale" not because they were Communists but because the Pétainists were singing "The Marseillaise," and even though he knew the identity of the neighbor whose denunciation led to his being sent to Buchenwald, he did not later retaliate lest it put him in "the same category" as his betrayer; a British secret agent recalls it was the working man in France who helped him, while the bourgeoisie charged for their aid; a former Wehrmacht captain, proudly wearing his decorations at his daughter's wedding party, is still incensed that the Resistance fighters who attacked his men stationed in the city didn't wear special identification; a former Wehrmacht soldier admits that perhaps the defeat of Hitler was just as well because otherwise he might still be on occupation duty "in Africa or in America."

Of the men who made history at the time or since, it is former Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-France, a young air force lieutenant in 1939, who emerges as the "star" of the film, a man whose finely lined face and quiet recollections show the seasoning of human experience. He recalls his attempt to rejoin his squadron, his trial and imprisonment by the Vichy regime as a deserter (and a Jew), his escape to England, his present awareness of sub-surface evils. Anthony Eden, the Communist leader Jacques Duclos, former Prime Minister Georges Bidault, the super-courageous English agent Denis Rake and various economists and diplomats involved, enrich the canvas. Perhaps most significant for younger people is an amazingly frank self-analysis by Christian de la Mazière, a French aristocrat who at twenty became a dedicated Nazi and fought on the Russian front with the Waffen S.S. While a guide leads a party of German tourists through other parts of his palatial ancestral home, he recalls that only 300 of the 7,000 Frenchmen in his

Charlemagne division returned from that front; his political thinking, he notes, has changed. The renowned "Gaspar," head of the Auvergne Maquis, remarks that when known collaborators today insist that they were secretly with the Resistance, he does not contradict them; his business, after all, is selling radios and television sets. . . .

In French and German newsreels, we go beyond the brainwashing, the distortions, the propaganda; we see nightclubs and racetracks flourishing; we see Danielle Darrieux and other stars entrain for Germany for movie-making; we see Maurice Chevalier jauntily collaborating and then emphasizing that it was only for the French boys abroad—in German prison camps.

With frequent voice-over English translations for the speakers and with subtitles, with a remarkable blending of the past and present—and with a complex intellectual probing that is a rare and refreshing change from the banal interview technique of television-oriented documentaries—Ophuls has explored the various facets of one part of our century's holocaust. Unpalatable for the French (why remember that the country was pro-Pétain, anti-Resistance, Anglophobic and anti-Semitic or wonder whether it has changed?), his work is a revelation for all of us, whether we are marked by having lived through the time or, born after it, unable to comprehend that monsters, however briefly, had inherited the earth in the name of the fatherland and the national good.

The **Godfather** is the name of the game we play with our "mass" morality approaches—and it's a fast, slick yummy absorbing game, much to our shame. Albert S. Ruddy's two-hour and 58-minute condensation (and a remarkably encompassing one it is) of Mario Puzo's 440-page novel, with screenplay by the novelist and Francis Ford Coppola and direction by Coppola, is, you see, as "good" as the novel—and as essentially immoral and therefore, in its new incarnation and availability to the illiterate, far more dangerous. Explaining that it had been foolhardy to delay exterminating a rival family, one of Puzo's gunmen declares, "You got to start at the beginning—like they should of stopped Hitler at Munich." The flaw is, of course, that this is not only, in effect, Himmler talking, but that the whole function of the film is to show us that Hitler is a grand sort of family man, gentle with children, daring and ruthless with enemies, implacable in the matter of honor and so loyal to the ties of blood that even a brother-in-law, to a sister's sorrow, must go (juicily garroted) if he happens to

have betrayed a son of the house.

There are, you see, "good" badmen and "bad" badmen (don't say that word "Mafia" or the F.B.I. and Italian B'nai Brith spank). The "good" Corleones are headed by a bejeweled rasp-voiced Marlon Brando, its prime sons personified by Al Pacino, an intense Latin version of Dustin Hoffman, as Michael, the educated war-hero, and James Caan, big, curly-headed and high-spirited, as Sonny. Why are they "good"? Well, Brando, the aging Don, is simply "a powerful man who's responsible for people," but even more important, he believes in getting rich from corrupt unions and gambling and scorns narcotics, if only because the "judges and politicians" he has in his pocket consider it "a dirty business." And if, in the course of enforcing this refined kind of criminal activity he and his two Lochinvars (for indeed the sons are heroes, complete with heartwarming and/or ill-fated romances and deep familial loyalties) shed slaughter and corruption and evoke it hither and yon, from New York to Hollywood to Las Vegas and Sicily—your heart is with them every step of the way.

What can scarcely be a revealing social text or even a "new" kind of movie (we'll cite only the near-classic *Mafioso* of 1964 or the commendable *The Brotherhood* of 1968) emerges, then, as a movie-movie entertainment, thanks to an intermittent sense of period (starting in 1945 and proceeding just where it's hard to tell, since one baby seems to be in gestation for several years). The very good cast, in fact, enforces one's affection for these most abominable of men: beyond the heroes cited above, there's Richard Castellano, simply superb as the Hitler-citing assassin; Robert Duvall as the family's adopted son and counselor; Richard Conte as a prime enemy; John Marley as a Hollywood producer, and Sterling Hayden in a bit as a corrupt police captain. (And even here the family's "goodness" is underlined, in its pioneer approach to a clean city, with "where does it say you can't gun down a crooked cop?") Even Castellano notes that he likes his guns noisy to "scare away any innocent bystanders" for their own protection.

Coppola, whose directorial credits rose above the disastrous *Finian's Rainbow* with *You're a Big Boy Now*, sustains a tension throughout the film—with a superb sequence of intercutting a baptismal ceremony with the simultaneous workmanlike, horrifying extermination of a rival family. The score for this part is provided by one J. S. Bach. You can't say the trash doesn't get first-class treatment. But the prophylaxis is the shame of it all. ■

Bet
you
can't
love
just
one.



Who says you have to! Stay at one of our beach-front resort hotels. Get full guest privileges at the other. Enjoy country club atmosphere at Grapetree Bay. Get in on the informal fun and action at Beach Hotel. Both offer sparkling pools, miles of private beach, snorkeling, skin-diving, sailing. Plenty of nighttime entertainment, too.

It's a beautiful double-take vacation. Take it and indulge your every mood.

**Grapetree
Bay Hotel**

BEACH HOTEL

OF GRAPETREE BAY

**ON THE WONDERFUL BEACHES
OF BEAUTIFUL GRAPETREE BAY.**

P.O. Box "Z", Christiansted,
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands 00820

See your travel agent, write direct or call
HETLAND & STEVENS, INC.

New York: (212) 667-1450

Boston: (617) 266-1370 • Chicago: (312) 372-4383
Also in Dallas, Miami, Ft. Lauderdale and Toronto.

**Make the first time
you buy an electric
portable your last.**

The perfect choice for the office-in-the-home, student's use. All metal, it's precision-built for years of continuous, dependable, trouble-free use. A complete range of fully electric, work-saving features makes it the ideal all-purpose typewriter. You'll appreciate the office-size keyboard with its soft touch for rapid, effortless typing. Available in a wide variety of distinctive type styles at your Adler dealer. He's listed in the Yellow Pages. Adler Business Machines, Inc., 1600 Route 22, Union, N.J. 07083 West: 4223 W. Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles 90016

ADLER

Satellite 1301 Electric Portable

