

Robert Enrico's

Au nom de tous les miens

For those who lived through the real Holocaust, watching the 1979 television miniseries *Holocaust* was nonetheless traumatic. In once-occupied countries like France, the showing of the series became a subject for furious debate, vociferous denials that the Holocaust had ever taken place and a resurgence of anti-Semitism. Some film producers felt there was a need for more films about the terrible wartime martyrdom of the Jews of Europe, and began casting about for stories. The France-Canada coproduction *Au nom de tous les miens*, which recently had its world premiere in Montreal, is one of these films.

Martin Gray (Majcek Grayewski) is a 58-year-old Warsawian, and a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, the Treblinka death camp, the Polish underground, the Soviet Red Army, and various business endeavors in the U.S. and France. In 1970, while living in the south of France, Gray's wife and family were killed in a forest fire, and Gray, after contemplating suicide, turned instead to writing. His 1971 autobiography, "Au nom de tous les miens" ghostwritten by French novelist and presidential cultural advisor Max Gallo, would sell 35 million copies worldwide and be translated into 19 languages. Gray held onto the film rights for 10 years, until French producers André Djaoui and Jacques-Eric Strauss and Franco-Italian film director Robert Enrico persuaded him they could make a film that would be faithful to the book's message of life.

Au nom de tous les miens thus faithfully Gray's story, beginning with his family's forced move into the Warsaw Ghetto, his adolescent discovery of black-marketeering and his descent into the inferno, in a chronicle of horrors that would not cease until Gray's desertion from the Red Army in its victorious rampage across Germany. While the postwar years would find Gray living a more or less normal life, that normality would be shattered by the second holocaust that consumed his immediate family — his grandmother, parents and younger brothers having died in the first. The film concludes with its beginning, where a shattered Martin Gray (played by Michael York strongly resembling Gray himself) resolves to tell the story of 'those I loved', the film's English title.

The book is a very slick commercial product: a page-turner, propelled along by ceaseless action. The film, while not quite as slick, is nevertheless on a respectable par with television's standards of big-screen fare: lots of sound and fury, tolerable amounts of blood and gore; feats of courage; in short, the Cecil B. De Mille version of history. Only the scenes involving Treblinka (elaborately reconstructed on location in Hungary) transcend these limitations to achieve something closer to the real horror of the events.

Despite competent performances by York (who also plays Gray's father, one of the organizers of the insanely heroic 1944 Warsaw uprising), and Macha Meril (Gray's mother), the weaknesses of *Au nom de tous les miens* are those of the book as well. The young French



● Descent into the Nazi inferno: *Au nom de tous les miens'* Michael York and Macha Meril arriving in the Warsaw Ghetto

actor, 24-year-old Jacques Penot, who plays the young Martin Gray, struggles valiantly to carry a very big part that's almost beyond him. Through no fault of his own, for the biggest mystery of the film (and the book) is that Gray himself is little more than someone who somehow survived through terrible experiences. It's never clear, either, why it was important to survive or how he was able to. He just did and lived to tell the story.

If Gray's message boils down to life at any price, that seems like pretty threadbare optimism. The film appears less concerned with overtly making a statement other than to show, perhaps, that when many people are swept up by cataclysmic events, some do make it through.

Given the origins of the film and Martin Gray's own dedication to the cause of public awareness of what the Holocaust meant, *Au nom de tous les miens* leaves something to be desired. But if you assume a public that knows nothing about what transpired in Europe during the years 1939-1945, then the film is at least a point of departure.

When considered from the vast American know-nothingness, such lingering traces of an educational purpose do nonetheless manage to reflect favorably on Canada's participation in the making of *Au nom de tous les miens*, even if the point of it all remains an American TV sale or Majors deal. Associating Canadian filmmaking, even remotely, with the European tragedy, confers a kind of much-needed dignity on those Canadians involved with the production. Enough, surely, to conclude that the experience can, will and should be repeated.

Still, one of the amusing games that

can be played with Canada's not especially amusing official coproductions (another kind of game played by producers and bureaucrats in tall buildings) is called Guess What's Canadian In This Officially Canadian Film. In this round, the clue is that *Au nom de tous les miens* had 20% Canadian participation, so you shouldn't set your expectations too high.

Time's up. If you answered "Not bloody much", you're right. Of Canada in this two-hour film one finds a three-minute interior sequence set in a Montreal apartment that's actually supposed to be in New York, as well as the odd brief exterior also masquerading as the good, old US of A. Informed sources report that there's hope a little more Canada (where two months of shooting took place) may yet appear on the six-hour miniseries slated to hit the box this spring.

Happily, there's another side to the coin. While there may not be much of Canada on-screen, Canadians behind the camera and behind the desks have done more than their 20% worth to bring this film to a theatre near you. Remarkably sharp eyesight is required to read the minuscule print at the bottom of the made-in-France presskit, but it does inform one that the film's Canadian executive producer was Los Angeles' own Pierre David; that Claude Héroux (the other half of the team that recently brought us *Going Berserk*, an authentic piece of L.A. Canadiana) was the Canadian producer; that Montreal production company Les productions mutuelles was one of the co-producing parties, along with Canadian dollars from the CFDC and Radio-Canada. And now, Canadian independent distributor René Malo has brought the completed

film home, so to speak, to recoup some of the \$2 million Canadian that went into the making of *Au nom de tous les miens*.

Michael Dorland ●

AU NOM DE TOUS LES MIENS d. Robert Enrico **exec. p.** André Djaoui (Fr.), Pierre David (Cda) **p.** Jacques-Eric Strauss (Fr.), Claude Héroux (Cda) **sc.** Robert Enrico, Tony Sheer, based on the book by Martin Gray and Max Gallo **mus. comp.** Maurice Jarre **a.d.** Stéphane Loison (Fr.), Attila Monos (Hungary), John Fretz (Cda), Angelo Pastore (Fr.), Frank Ruszczyński (Cda), Jérôme Enrico (Fr.) **coach** Louise Vincent **cont.** Monique Champagne (Cda) **cam. op.** François Catonne **focus** Bernard Noisette **cam. assts.** Michel Sourieux, Pascal Rabaud, Pascal Ridao, Yvan Brunet (Cda), Jonathan Goodwill (Cda) **sd.** Claude Hazanavicius (Cda), Harrik Maury **sd. stage** Jean Neny, Jacques Thomas-Gerard **ed.** Patricia Neny **sd. ed.** Michèle Neny **assts. sd.** Aurore Camp, Michel Klochendler **dubbing** Daniel Couteau **art d.** Jean-Louis Poveda **p. des.** François de Lucy (Cda) **asst. art d.** Jean-Pierre Lemoine, Tivadar Bertalan (Hung.), Jeffrey Goodman (Cda) **res.** Naciba Sator **props.** Marcel Laude **cost. des.** Corinne Jorry **dressers** Christine Guegan, Michele Richer **stillsmen** Egon Endrenyi (Hung.), Pirooska Mihalka (Cda), Yves Mirkiné **make-up** Phueng Maîtrret, Michèle Dion (Cda), Sandor Matrai (Hung.) **hair** Constant Natale (Cda) **key grip** André Atellian, Marc de Ernsted (Cda) **gaffers** Jean-Claude Le Bras, Don Caulfield (Cda), Ferenc Katai (Hung.) **firearms** Bela Gajdos (Hung.) **stunts** Pierre Rosse **assoc. p.** Maurice Genoyer, Denise Di Novi (Cda) **p. man.** Francis Peltier, Peter Ivanov (Hung.), Roger Héroux (Cda) **p. admin.** André Mennecier, Serge Major (Cda) **loc. man.** François Ouimet (Cda), Ildiko Vegvari (Hung.) **p. assts.** Sylvia Montalti, Monik Nantel (Cda) **p. sec.** Thérèse Prigent, Solange Cazier-Charpentier, Patricia Cahill (Cda) **cast. d.** Ginette D'Amico (Cda) **cast. Toronto** Deirdre Bowen (Cda) **filmed on location in** France, Hungary, Canada, and the U.S. **p.c.** Producteurs Mutuelles Associes, TF1 Films Production (Fr.), Les productions mutuelles Ltee (Cda), with the participation of Societe Radio-Canada and the Canadian Film Development Corp. **dist. Europe:** Cinema International Corp. **dist. Québec:** Les Films René Malo Inc. **lp.** Michael York, Jacques Penot, Brigitte Fossey, Macha Meril, Helen Hughes.