

his warders they have revealed a lack of concern over Danny as an individual, and have thereby deprived the viewer of some of the dramatic participation to which he is entitled. As for the social issue, *Walls* hints that humaneness is the best attitude as far as making prison a more pleasant place goes, but that an atmosphere of trust and compassion can be poisoned in an instant so long as a capacity for cruelty remains in people. The film even leaves open the possibility that Joan was the cruellest of all, for making Danny believe in a mercy that was impractical and therefore could only be snatched away.

Paul Vitols ●

WALLS d. Tom Shandel sc. Christian Bruyère exec. p. Michael Chechik p. Christian Bruyère & Tom Shandel assoc. p. Tom Braidwood ed. Barbara Evans mus. J. Douglas Dodd & Michael Oczko d.o.p. Douglas McKay p. des. Graeme Murray p. man Tom Braidwood 1st ad.d. Bob Akester sc. sup. Christine Wilson 1st asst. cam. Trig Singer 2nd asst. cam. Joel Ransom gaffers Burt Skelton, Dave Anderson best boy Leonard Wolf, Jim Hurford key grip Fred Ransom loc. sd. Richard Patton sd. boom B.J. Clayden cost. des. Trish Keating ward. sup. Tish Monaghan prop. master Wayne McLaughlin asst. props. Bill Thumm make-up Linda A. Brown asst. make-up Phyllis Newman sd. ed. Jane Morrison, Ingrid Rosen asst. ed. Bruce Giesbrecht 2nd asst. ed. Patricia Isaacs neg. cut. Daniele De Foy sd. mix. Barry P. Jones set dec. Rose Marie McSherry asst. set dec. Della Johnston const. coord. Barry Broly lead carp. Garry Broly carp. Chris Prior lead painter Elmar Theissen sp. painter Philip Morgan set wireman Duncan McGregor greensman Mark Guildemeester labor. Ben Rusi, Bob Nicholson, Chris Wills, Dennis McBride 2nd a. d. Mathew O'Connor 3rd a. d. Rob Cowan university loc. Fitch Cady p. coord. Gabriella Martinelli, Catherine Howard p. acct. Elizabeth Pontsa cast. d. Lindsay Walker asst. cast. Michelle Allen, Hagan Beggs art work Cecilia Ohm-Eriksen sp. efx. Thomas Special Effects Ltd. sp. efx. tech. Bill Orr teamsters Ken Johnston, Ian Urquhart, George Grieve add. photog. Tobias Schliessler, Trig Singer p. asst. Christopher Haddock craft serv. Leslie Beale cater. Brown Cow lighting Canadian Prolite Inc. sec. Moss' Trucking Services mus. rec. Goldrush Recording Co. at Mushroom Studios, Vancouver post. p. Omni Film Productions Ltd. titles West Coast Film Opticals lab. Alpha Cine Services p. c. Jericho Films (604) 224-0506, 732-9983 intl. sales Films Transit (514) 527-9781 running time: 90 mins. lp. Winston Rekert, Andrée Pelletier, Alan Scarfe, John Wright, John Lord, Lloyd Berry, Howard Storey, Antony Holland, Elizabeth Leigh-Milne, Perry Long, Dale Wilson, Tony Morelli, Jacques Hubert, Raimund Stamm, Ron Sauvé, Blu Mankuma, Denis Nouveau, Kent Barrett, Christopher Haddock, Hagan Beggs, Judith Berlin, Mike Winlaw, Lon Katzman, Cam Lane, John Wardlow, Ted Stidder

Martin Lavut's **Charlie Grant's War**

CBC producer Bill Gough, writer Anna Sandor and director Martin Lavut chose to build *Charlie Grant's War* around the myth Grant was "an ordinary man who made a difference." It is an odd choice, given the details of Grant's life in this made-for-television feature, and one which reduces the film's dramatic scope.

Grant, an unsung Canadian hero who helped rescue 600 Viennese Jews from the Nazis before the Second World War, must have experienced radical personal changes in his lifetime. He left behind a complacent upperclass Vancouver existence when he journeyed to Europe in 1930, where eventually he became established in the Vienna diamond trade and mixed with the city's best

society. At a time when "ordinary" men either sided with the Nazis or conveniently ignored their treatment of Jews, Grant risked his life to save people who were neither his family, co-religionists nor countrymen. As a price he suffered the horrors of wartime prison and concentration camps – and survived. This is hardly an ordinary, but a singular, complex, extraordinary man.

Yet the film, especially in its treatment of the early Vienna days, where his whole achievement just drops into his lap, chooses to simplify Grant in a way that seems false. A carefree Grant knocks about Europe until his money runs out in Vienna, at which point destiny provides a series of wonderful people to befriend him: they just can't help trusting his honest Canadian face. While playing up Grant's charmed life among the musicians, intellectuals and cultural elite of Vienna, the film avoids any emphasis that he moves among predominantly Jewish society. Its light-weight tone ignores the possibility Grant's benefactors might have had an ulterior motive – to place a sympathetic Gentile foreigner deliberately in an influential position to help them later.

The film eschews such complexity. It keeps safe distance from a theme which could have given it extraordinary emotional weight: Grant's personal identification with the Jews. Born into a WASP family whose anti-Semitism is ingrained (his mother, though working to get Jews into Canada, comments: "It's one thing to keep them out of clubs – I can understand that"), Grant himself bears no prejudice. The film never tells us why. Grant is fatherless; his uncle Manlus (Douglas Campbell) looks after him only from a sense of duty; his two father-figures, Jacob Goldman (Jan Rubes) and Paul Trefius (Peter Boretski), are both Jewish. This intriguing motif at best remains submerged. The film minimizes Grant's Canadian family life,

ending before his inevitable confrontation with his uncle and reunion with his mother, who reluctantly took up his cause.

Charlie Grant's War holds your interest largely because of R.H. Thomson's agile and skilled performance in the leading role. Thomson plays Grant as a typical Canadian hero – that is, a hero who is barely heroic. In manner, gesture and expression Thomson leaves no doubt Grant is a Canadian abroad, not an American or a Brit: unimpressed with airs and pomp, he still worries that his clothes are wrong. A Thomson performance is always a pleasure – his exuberance carries the role – yet it does not seem to convey the real Charlie Grant. That man's personal wars – against family, country and self – remain obscure.

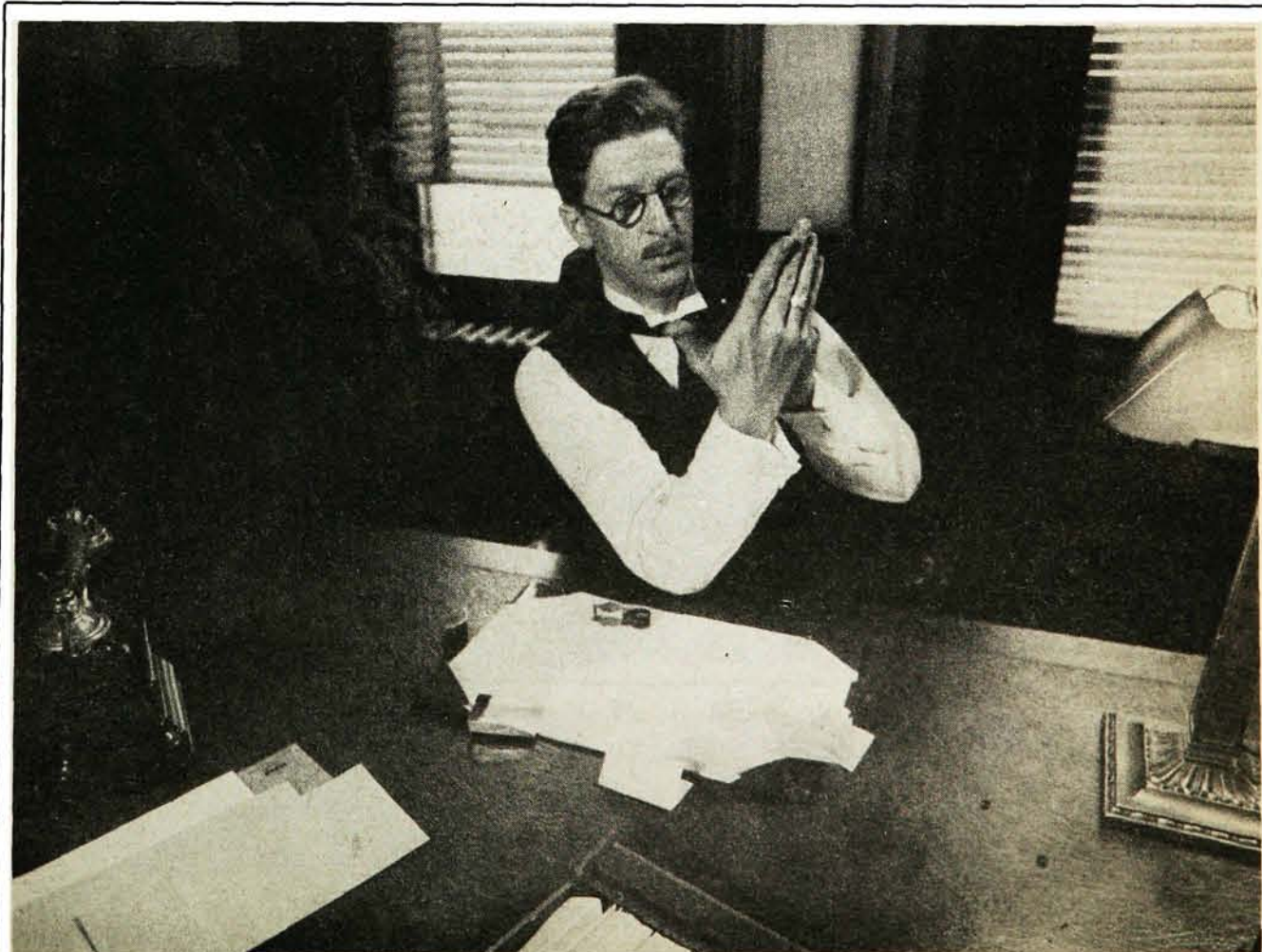
Issues, not characters, shape *Charlie Grant's War* – the refugee question, Austria's collective responsibility, the Mackenzie King government's shameful policy toward Jewish immigration. The film emerges from CBC's docudrama tradition – Gough, Sandor and Lavut all have worked on the network's docudrama series *For The Record* – a tradition which tends to place social and political perspectives ahead of personal ones. Docudrama style accounts for the film's superfluous newsreel footage (the 1930s Austria setting alone should cue the impending Nazi rise) and its earnest journalistic tone. It uses Grant's personal story to illustrate the Canadian government's unconscionable anti-Semitism, featuring characterizations of Prime Minister Mackenzie King and Immigration Minister Frederick Blair, and informing us that Canada received a disgracefully low total of 5,000 Jewish refugees during that period (if Grant has been unsung, it is because most Canadians would prefer to forget their country's shame). Social criticism stands behind Grant's misplaced confidence that Canada would accept his Jewish

friends or the ironic banality of lines like "All citizens are treated equally in the civil service." But this political stance takes precedence over Grant's personal story. The film seldom accommodates the viewer's desire to look a little deeper into Grant's character.

When director Lavut can interrupt the social and political agenda long enough to fix his camera on the actors and keep it there, as when Jacob Goldman teaches Grant kaddish in the concentration-camp quarry, the film registers a substantial emotional impact. The concentration-camp sequence is the film's strongest, perhaps because all issues are reduced to the bare requirements of survival. However, these moments of genuine drama, as opposed to dramatized social criticism, are too few: the film needs less history, more Grant. But with an "ordinary" Grant at the centre, lacking conflict, self-doubt, or an engaging complexity, the docudrama approach cannot sustain the film's two hours and 15 minutes length and this compelling story rarely soars to compelling heights. *Charlie Grant's War* is by no means a bad film: if only it were not so damned undistinguished.

Bruce Malloch ●

CHARLIE GRANT'S WAR d. Martin Lavut a.d. Rob Malenfant sc. Anna Sandor p. Bill Gough assoc. p. Harris Verge d.o.p. Vic Sarin orig. mus. Thomas LeGrady art. d. Arthur Herriott unit man. Neill Browne cast. Marsha Chesley, Doug Barnes film ed. Myrle Virgo p.c. CBC-TV l.p. R.H. Thomson, Joan Orenstein, Jan Rubes, Douglas Campbell, Marigold Charlesworth, Peter Boretski, John Friesen, Nicholas Rice, Annie Szomosi, David Bolt, Heinar Pillar, Michael J. Reynolds, Jean Archambault, Peter Dvorsky, Michael Fletcher, Belinda Metz, Charles Palmer, Larry Reynolds, Joe Cooper, Brendan McKane, Derek Keurvorst, Robin McCullough, Vlasta Vrana, Michael Tait, Don Macquarrie, Chris Bark running time: 129 mins.



● R.H. Thomson as Charlie Grant: obscurity hiding behind an honest Canadian face