

CANNES 86

The Year of Revelation



• *Le Déclin de l'empire américain* by Denys Arcand

by Marc Gervais

Twenty years of heroic service at the Cannes Film Festival have convinced me of at least one thing. Nowhere, but nowhere, can one consistently experience so surrealistic and contradictory a mixture of images, sensations, facts, ideas. Cannes '86 was no exception. It was all there, the ridiculous and the sublime, the good surprises and the fiascos, the tawdry and the noble.

Big Business? Where film is *really* at (as we used to say)? The "New Hollywood"? Well, come to Cannes and watch the Go-Go Boys, those indomitable cousins, Menachem Golan and Yoram Globus, parlay a small U.S. film company, Cannon, into the Big Time, hurtling it into the giddy stature of a world Major For this was the Year — once again, but now in a "serious" incarnation — of Cannon. From the beginning of the Festival (with their Polanski film, *The Pirate*) right through to the end (three other biggies in the Official Competition, besides some 20 other features in the Market and elsewhere), the Cannon presence was in evidence: numberless mammoth posters and displays, receptions, news stories, press conferences — and all of it loud, brassy, exuberant, arrogant, Cannon, it seems, is now going high-class (to go with the schlock of the past and the present), with every director from Coppola to Godard, and every superstar (Stallone, Pacino, Voight) coming under the once upstart company's banner. But more, folks, much more; the daily trade papers in attendance kept cannonading us with scoop after scoop as Cannon gobbled up movie house chains in the U.S., Italy, Holland, Britain (over half the cinema houses), West Germany — and on it goes, with cable TV exhibiting deals thrown in (Can Canada be far behind?)

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Is Cannon the coming number one film power, or is it, as its detractors hope, a house of cards ready to fall apart at the first serious financial tremor? No wonder, then, that at the Festival's end, *Newsweek* (international edition) gave its cover story to the Cannon Cousins.

Cannes, of course, reveals other aspects of reel life and real life. As the Festival began, good old reliables such as Mario Ferreri and Nagisa Oshima were in attendance with their usual doses of sexual aberration, bestiality — that kind of cinema. But as the Festival progressed this year, a remarkable thing was beginning to manifest itself. Gradually, religion (the real thing, in terms of serious, deep concern and probing) began to dominate the scene. The critics were highlighting it in their articles; and sure enough, the Jury prizes confirmed what the headlines were gleefully proclaiming: "Dieu triomphe à Cannes!" "Le jury consacre Dieu."

Rambo, as we heard, chickened out. Sylvester Stallone, no fool, and quite aware of the U.S. war-lust he plays to nowadays (inspite of his fatuous public disclaimers), had decided not to come to Cannes for fear of "terrorist reprisals." Many other U.S. stars and directors stayed away, apparently believing the vision of the world their President is trying so hard to make a reality, aided and abetted by the hysteria of the North American media. The result: with true Cannesian unpredictability, this year's Festival turned out to be the most pleasant, enjoyable, civilized and (relatively) easy-going event in years. Nary a *souçon* of bomb threats or demonstrations, though security pervaded the place, welcomed by all in attendance, with good humour and friendliness. To be sure, the magnificent weather, in marked contrast to the drizzling cold of recent years, played its part in bringing

a festive spirit to what is, after all, supposed to be a Festival. And the fact that Cannes '86 saw one masterpiece, as well as many other very good movies, did not hurt one bit.

And surely there was something else contributing to the positive feeling. One month previous to opening night, the Khadafi/Reagan terrorist escalation had appalled that part of the world that is civilized and intelligent; and two weeks later, the Chernobyl catastrophe had brought in its wake a dose of consciousness, especially to the Europeans. It was as if *this* Festival was determined to be a *Festival*, a blessed relief from the signs of escalating madness.

An image, both threatening and pathetic, helped put this in perspective for me. All through the festival a magnificent "Spanish Galleon" constructed for the opening night's *The Pirate* (a silly film directed by an artistically bankrupt Roman Polanski) lay at anchor in the Old Port, to every Cannes stroller's delight. One day after the festival end (and with uncharacteristically diplomatic timing), the huge U.S. aircraft supercarrier *America*, on Mediterranean patrol near you-know-where glided into port, not far from *The Pirate's* galleon. The movie world versus the real world, or back to reality-as-shaped-by-certain-powers, one thought. The pathos, of course, centred on the hundreds of teenage U.S. navvies not particularly privileged nor affluent nor aware wandering politely around Cannes, supervised by their Military Police — today's front-line super-power sailors, most of whom, one felt, should still be in school.

And there were, of course, the movies, the reason most of us come to this former Riviera resort for the affluent British. As always, one is aware that one cannot possibly do justice to the whole

scene, that one's choices are partial, enlightened perhaps by clever networking, but still subjected to one's own *a priori* and natural preferences. With that firmly in mind, I nonetheless give my own reading of the scene this May.

The Americans. Many were absent, but there were plenty of U.S. films in and out of competition, over-all the largest national representation. John Voight was twice spot-lighted, once for Andrei Konchalovsky's *Runaway Train*, and once for Eugene Corr's *Desert Bloom*; Steven Spielberg's *The Color Purple*, and Robert Altman/Sam Shepard's *Fool For Love*, Martin Scorsese's *After Hours*, and Woody Allen's *Hannah and Her Sisters* (the latter two excellent films) rounded out a strong contingent. But since most of these are by now old news in North America... and, besides, American pizzazz was definitely overshadowed by the Cannon Boys' determined attempt to re-create Hollywood in their own image.

The French continued to be mildly disappointing. Claude Lelouch's *Un homme et une femme: Déjà vingt ans* had its moments of charm, an essentially pleasing, nostalgic film whose real centre dissolved due to Lelouch's penchant for flashy tricks. For those of us who were here, in Cannes 20 years ago for Lelouch's first triumph, there was an emotional complicity, a sad delight in seeing Jean-Louis Trintignant and Anouk Aimée reunited, still sort-of-young.

Alain Cavalier's *Thérèse* saved the day for France (see below). But perhaps the clearest indicator for the decline, long begun, of the French cinema, was André Téchiné's *Le Lieu du Crime* A thriller, with a touch of Truffaut, and more than a touch of Chabrol — but without their mastery of style, wit, flair, their amazing cinematic intuitiveness, not to say genius — *Lieu* becomes just a fairly stylish commercial film, a sad reminder of what used to be and ain't no more.

Some of the others with past moments of glory but rather unimpressive present-day performances failed to create any *éclat* whatever. The Soviets keep on doggedly sending their serious, stodgy, pedestrian "historically suitable" heavyweights, true to the exquisite sensitivity of bureaucratic control. Sergei Bondarchuk's **Boris Godunov** managed to live down to its depressing expectations. Italy continues to flounder in its showy, obsessional, meticulous fashion Franco Zeffirelli's **Otello**. (Verdi) did have its operatic moments, with the usual visual lushness one expects in Zeffirelli, and it did have Plácido Domingo, yet another example (though in a lesser mode) of that basic critical axiom: "Tenors should be heard and not seen - especially in the cinema." This was a Cannon prestige production by the way, and is a precursor of next year's special Cannes theme, "Opera and the Cinema." The Japanese showed little to elicit enthusiasm, and ditto for the Germans. An Austrian production, however, Axel Corti's **Welcome in Vienna** was one of those nice unheralded surprises, a very interesting treatment of Vienna in the immediate post-war (WWII) days.

The Nordic countries continue to turn out interesting modest films of merit. Rauni Mollberg's remake of the Finnish classic, **The Unknown Soldier**, was rather special, one of the Festival's most ambitious films, a powerful outcry about the futility of war - as opposed to the "war is beautiful" syndrome of some politicians back home. Sweden had probably the most interesting offerings however: Ingmar Bergman's own film on the making of **Fanny and Alexander**, and, of course, the film of the Festival, **The Sacrifice**, made in Sweden by the expatriate Russian Andrei Tarkovsky (see below).

Britain. Probably the most dazzling, creative and exciting presence at Cannes this year was that of the British. After all, this *was* the British Film year, presided over by the ubiquitous David Puttnam; and it seems that the effort to inject new life into a fine industry that was becoming moribund has paid off handsomely. It's not only that the British can claim **Out of Africa** as one of theirs; nor even that Puttnam's own **The Mission** won the Palme d'Or, thereby perhaps enabling Goldcrest, a major British company, to weather its financial crisis. What really excites rather are those many marvellous "small" British films that have provided a delight to audiences of ever-growing proportions. Thus at Cannes we were rewarded with Neil Jordan's **Mona Lisa**, Stephen Bayly's **Coming Up Loses** (the first feature ever in Welsh!) and many more, (**Heavenly Pursuits**, **Defence of the Realm**, **My Beautiful Laundrette** etc.). More often than not, TV's Channel Four, and its movie production arm, Film Four, are involved to some degree in these productions, as well as in high quality international coproductions such as Tarkovsky's **The Sacrifice**. There's a whole story to be told here about enlightened collaborative

creativity between TV and cinema, a possible model for a country such as ours. But an adequate discussion would necessitate time and space beyond this article. The uncertainty, however, over British cinema perdures, thanks to the take-over of over half of Britain's screens by Cannon, and by Cannon's promise to inject new production capital into British film - a mixed blessing indeed.

The Australians enjoyed another banner year in Cannes. Nothing of the quality of **Breaker Morant** or **Gallipoli**, but plenty of good entertaining films. Of the 25 new ones they brought to Cannes in various competitions and for the Market, I saw (to my surprise) about nine - and every one of them recommendable. Bruce Beresford was back in the Official Competition with **Fringe Dwellers**, not quite up to his usual work. Beresford is off again for a while to the U.S., but Peter Weir and Fred Schepisi are back in Aussie-land. Veterans such as Tim Burstall and Donald Crombie are at work, Paul Cox continues to grow, and a whole batch of young names are emerging, many of them women. **Cactus**, **Emma's War**, **Death of a Soldier**, **Jenny Kissed Me**, **Burke and Wills** - the list goes on of vigorous, stylish, personable Australian work. In a renewed spirit of confidence, Ken Adams, chairman of the Australian Film Commission, seemed convinced that the Aussie cinema now rests on a solid base, firm in its commitment to its own culture. In that conviction he looks forward to coproductions and the financial possibilities they can offer for small-population countries. And, in a remarkable change of attitude, he now seemed to be looking forward with relish to an official coproduction treaty with Canada, something the Canadians were keen to implement in the past.

What Canada does in terms of coproduction agreements with Australia we should know before long - and whether or not we are able to exploit the immense creative possibilities presented by artistic collaboration with the Australians, whose feature cinema still far outshines ours when it comes to production values, dollars well-spent, and, indeed, general all-round quality. Coproduction, if handled properly, can work even at the cultural level. And that was proven by one of the best Canadian films shown at Cannes this year, Anne Wheeler's **Loyalties**, starring Canadians Tantoo Cardinal and Kenneth Welsh, and Britian's Susan Wooldridge (seen on TV in **Jewel in the Crown**). **Loyalties**, originally shot as a CBC television movie, is the Canadian half of a *winning* coproduction agreement between Canada's Lauron Productions and Britain's Dumbarton Films; two films are made, one of which is almost totally Canadian, the other almost totally British, the coproductions' equal sharing (and consequent double national certification) coming from the equally shared total package. What has resulted in the Canadian product is a genuinely indigenous film, a modest but highly intelligent and touching story about the growing friendship between two 40-

year-old women, one of them British, to the Manor born, the other a Canadian Indian bar waitress of mixed blood - and both with man problems. Well crafted, superb in its handling of acting, and rich in its human (feminist) insights, **Loyalties** captures life at Lac La Biche in Northern Alberta and the complexities of cultural adaptation. It may well be the best dramatic portrayal of *contemporary* Canadian Indians yet seen. May our first twinning coproduction with the Brits (as *Variety* would put it) serve as a model for future undertakings.

There were some fifty-five!! Canadian features in one form or another, some new, some old, on sale on the Market, some of them handled by foreign (U.S.) exporting agents, some of them by Canadians (i.e., Films Transit, Films René Malo, Simcom, Spectrafilm, Les Films du Crépuscule). There is no way of arriving at a total cash income figure derived from Cannes; even Telefilm Canada has to say "if you want to know, go to the exporting agents." But the definite impression is that these agents were indeed selling the Canadian product. Cannes was, in other words, a very useful financial exercise for them. As world movie players, we seem to have left the adolescent stage, playing the game now as the other grown-ups do.

This becomes extremely promising in the light of what happened at Cannes a few weeks previous to the Festival. I refer to the MIP TV market; and here the Canadian success story was truly remarkable. As of now, already in excess of \$40 million has poured into Canada (via sales pre-sales, signed coproductions x see box). Canada's exciting breakthrough in the production of excellent TV dramatic programming has not gone unnoticed. In the international scramble for product, the Europeans are forming consortiums to try to compete with the U.S.; and Canadian producers are doing the same, within the country and looking outside. Former Communications Minister Francis Fox's levy on cable (to the tune of \$60 million a year) for Telefilm Canada's broadcast fund does indeed seem to be paying off handsomely where it really counts - in the product.

What does this mean for Canadian feature films, "real movie" movies? Here, too, the prospects are giddy - current Communications Minister Marcel Masse's new \$33 million feature fund for Telefilm Canada may very well do for movie production what the \$60 million is doing for TV. Add to that the considerable in-put at the provincial level in Quebec, Alberta and Ontario and you have well over \$100 million being poured annually into film/TV production - and that merely as the essential base on which private capital can build.

The trick, now, is to ensure that all that money and potential activity not go down the drain - again - whether to American studios or shoddy entrepreneurial schemes. There is some fine-tuning to be done; and Telefilm Canada, the CBC, the CRTC, the National Film Board and the Minister of Communications must, in conjunction with the provinces, coordinate their activities. And as for the all-essential private sector, those who can benefit most from all of this - the producers, distributors, broadcasters, exhibitors, and the direc-

tors, writers and other craftspeople - this is the time when all is possible. But greed and stupidity can destroy this moment of incomparable opportunity, as it often has in the past.

My own sunny critical disposition, however, illuminates a much more benign scenario. The breakthrough has already occurred in TV. And one can genuinely hope that we are on the verge of a new creative wave in feature film production as well. Here, of course, the media interact on each other. Success in one area can prove a shot in the arm for the other. As a matter of fact, Cannes gave the impression that Canadian feature films are already turning the corner. We are no longer being dismissed with contempt, as we have been these last years. The change in attitude may have begun at last winter's festival in Berlin, with **Anne Trister's** reception by the Germans. This year's Cannes Canadian offerings were eliciting some real interest... or so it seemed to me.

The Canadian presence was an interesting and encouraging one. Two animated shorts were in the Official competition, Dan Collin's **Dry Noodles**, and **Turbo Concert**, by Martin Barry, who graduated last year from Concordia University - no small feat indeed for two young filmmakers. Though Canada had no feature-length movies in the Official Competition, two of its features did score impressively in another festival show-case, the prestigious Directors' Fortnight (*La Quinzaine des réalisateurs*). **Dancing in the Dark**, a first feature scripted and directed from Joan Barfoot's novel by Leon Marr, is an impressive, rigorous, difficult movie, displaying a rare sureness, discipline and total fidelity to the director's inspiration. Marr sacrifices all easy effects, cinematographic tricks and the "safe" traditional movie ways in this dark and relevant movie, enhanced by a striking performance by Martha Henry. A product growing out of feminist insights, **Dancing** helped bring a renewed respect for Canadian cinema, and points to a promising, new director on the scene.

The other Canadian feature in the Fortnight, Denis Arcand's **Le Déclin de l'empire américain**, **The Decline of the American Empire** was nothing short of a hit, both artistically and at the popular level. **Decline** won the FIP-RESCI (International Critics) award as best film in the Quinzaine; it should have been in the Official Competition.

A devastating attack on the Quebec of the affluent, intellectually hip middle-class (a group of college/university professors in Montreal), **Decline** is a black comedy of manners, whose beginning, middle and end is sex talk, some of it funny, some of it stupid, some of it "realistically" scabrous - sex as the ultimate commodity of self-centred bourgeois society, a sort of titillating Quebec version of **The Big Chill**, *sans* poetry, *sans* let-up, *buis clos*. **Decline** reveals an Arcand at the top of his powers, still the severe moral observer, a kind of impish Savonarola castigating the sexual mores of his own world, with more than a sly touch of complicity and the naughty-boy-out-to-shock thrown in. If the French reaction is any indication, Arcand and the National Film Board have a hit on their hands. Add to that **Dancing in the Dark**, **Loyalties** and (in a different vein) a film such as

Pouvoir Intime and you had a pretty promising Canadian presence on the Croisette this May.

Cannes always has its moments of cultivated nostalgia, at its best a manifestation of true affection for artists of the past and for the achievement their work represents in the history of the art form.

Ingmar Bergman's own **Document: Fanny and Alexander**, in the context becomes a lovely, personal testimonial to the master's last film – if indeed **Fanny and Alexander** really is his last "movie movie." Orson Welles was remembered, as Oja Kodar, the love of his last twenty-two years, gave an emotional introduction to that master's ill-fated attempts at bringing **Don Quixote** to the screen. Efforts are currently underway to reconstruct some sort of film from the many bits he managed to shoot; and Cannes furnished the opportunity, through the Cinémathèque Française, of screening 45 minutes of selected rushes – a not totally satisfying experience. Simone Signoret, magnetic screen star, writer, political activist, received her tribute, too, a disappointing event, as it sadly turned out, built around a documentary put together by Chris Marker. Not so, however, for the Festival's warmest, most joyful moment, the special event honouring Britain's Michael Powell, a bright, stylish, innovative film director of the '30s, '40s, '50s, etc... now restored to critical favour, and Emeric Pressburger, his collaborator for many years (but too ill to attend). Powell, spry and spritely in his advanced eighties, was squired about by a delighted and delightful Dirk Bogarde, who, like everyone else, was carried away by the smiles of the affectionate moment.

Cannes 1986 was indeed a filmic kaleidoscope celebrating the past, revealing present trends, and sometimes indicating where the film world is headed. Or the real world for that matter; for film can be a matchless reflector of contemporary life and the complex, indefinable ways that man and women, right now, try to understand and cope with the human situation.

In that sense, May's filmic event was certainly no disappointment, nothing short, perhaps, of what the French love to call *une révélation*, a breakthrough. Many of the films, to be sure, reflected, as in the past, human beings trapped in obsession, ill at ease, unadapted to a crazy world. The common theme, once again, was that the world has gone crazy, and that we all wander about in a loss of direction. One thing for sure: the dream of the material paradise as the answer to all human needs and aspirations is no more. There is little of that faith of not many years ago in the solutions proposed, say, by the Marxist or Freudian brands of cultural/political revolution.

Seen from that perspective, Denys Arcand's **Decline of the American Empire** takes on the role of witness to the emptiness of post-Christian man and the spiritual wasteland produced by his materialism. Even **Dancing in the Dark** and, to a lesser extent, the more "positive" **Loyalties**, for all their wisdom and feminist insight, indicate at best diminished hopes, pretty well limited to the socio-psychological level.

But film always has an elusive, mysterious quality that defies appropriation into strictly rationalistic or materialistic categories. So many of the movies seen at Cannes are structured on a sometimes obvious, sometimes hidden sympathy for their characters and the plight that they share with the rest of us. Unquestionably, there is a reaching out beyond the solutions offered by psychology or social action, but almost all of it muted, implicit or rendered impotent by doubt. Few filmmakers in recent years have offered more than that. And certainly the spheres inhabited by, say, the early Fellini, by Bergman now and again, by Olmi and Bresson and a few others – in Canada by Paul Almond a few years back – have been beyond main-line cinema life, beyond its parameters of relevance.

Well, Cannes '86 may indeed come as a revelation, a witnessing to important areas of the contemporary cinema's turning to a conscious, explicit, deliberate concern for and exploration of what might be termed the spiritual, religious, metaphysical. When told of the Festival's prize winners, the night clerk at my Cannes hotel smiled: "You see, Malraux was right (when he said in the '50s), 'The 21st century will be religious, or it will cease to be.'" Or as the popular song promising a new era of the spirit put it a few decades ago: "This is the dawning of the age of Aquarius..." A few films, true, do not a lasting trend create. And to call Cannes (as did some French media wags) "le triomphe de Dieu," may indeed be pushing matters just a little. Nonetheless, the very presence of a significant number of overtly religious films, and above all their winning of the official accolades, would have been unthinkable a decade ago.

Woody Allen, America's finest director, has always skimmed over the surface of that territory; and his **Hannah and Her Sisters**, which would have won a major prize had it been in competition, continues to search in a playful, whimsical mode. Paul Cox, rapidly winning recognition as one of the very best of the Aussies, pursues in **Cactus** his explorations of a love that is beyond the material confines. And then, of course, there were the three movies, as stated earlier, that won the Official Competition's awards as best, second-best and third-best films – and that unearthed(?) three totally different ways of bringing directly religious concerns to the cinema.

Alain Cavalier's **Thérèse**, which won the "prix special du jury" (which translates as "for third-best film in competition") is a very witty and sympathetic essay in modernist cinema. Dramatised, unlyrical and bereft of psychological explanation and traditional narrative construction, **Thérèse** confronts us with a moving snapshot biography of Sainte Thérèse de Lisieux, the young Carmelite nun who so captured the imagination of turn-of-the-century France. Cavalier brings an attitude of critical distanciation, refusing all traditional easy effects, as he confronts head-on this young woman's absolute love for God and her avowed need to "save souls" by prayer and sacrifice. Funny, warm, abstract, beautiful – Cavalier's film lays its challenge before the contemporary audience, take it or leave it, in a statement about life, love and commitment, brought to the screen

with freshness, spontaneity and a sense of irony, in a glowing performance by student actress Catherine Mouchet.

Not so the epic path followed by the Festival's Palme d'Or (top prize) winner, **The Mission**, an overtly religious adventure of a very different kind. Fresh from their triumph in **The Killing Fields**, Britain's remarkable producer David Puttnam and director Roland Joffé renewed their collaborative efforts in another film of immense scope and ambition, this one a true historical event centring on one of the Jesuit Missions in South America in the mid-eighteenth century. Starring Jeremy Irons and Robert de Niro, and scripted by Robert Bolt, **The Mission** tells the story of the Jesuits' struggle with the Portuguese and Spanish slave traders of that era. As such, it becomes a pretty obvious moral allegory, filled with contemporary concerns and issue – and unmistakably relevant applications for the despicable goings-on in Central America today. Indeed, the presence of legendary Jesuit peace activist Daniel Berrigan in the film wipes away any possible doubt as to its intentions.

The Mission may not satisfy those looking for historical and political nuance and complexity. It sticks to the essentials of the issue in its determination to tell the story clearly and deliver the message unequivocally. We are not talking here about a filmic masterpiece re-inventing film language and film art as a whole. One can regret the choice of Ennio Morricone's music, whose habitual lushness, it seems to me, detracts from the purity of the experience. **The Mission**, however, represents a heartening example of responsible commercial filmmaking, rooted in traditional mass-appeal cinematography and scripting at their best. It is, indeed, a work of quality, resplendent in its photography, intelligent, totally dedicated to the dignity and rights of human beings, and powerful in its outrage at the greed of super-power exploitation. As such, it is fully in keeping with the humanitarian ideals of Joffé and Puttnam.

In view of Joffé's strong feelings about Central America today, his choice of a historical, rather than contemporary, setting surprised some. At his press conference in Cannes, Joffé explained that a contemporary film on Latin America would almost surely have been consumed by the passion of immediate, present-day ideological/political concerns. The hope for humanity, he now has come to feel, must be grounded *also* in the spiritual dimension. In a historical film he would have the freedom to try to communicate this. Hence **The Mission**; and hence, too, the rather special character of Cannes '86.

One film presented at Cannes '86, however, did have masterpiece written all over it. It may also prove to be one of the most profoundly religious movie experiences ever filmed, directed by a Russian who moved to Florence a few years ago. Difficult, demanding, mysterious, ineffable – Andrei Tarkovsky's **The Sacrifice** is surely all of these. And this may well explain why the jury, headed by Sydney Pollack, shied away from the Palme d'Or, deeming it fit to award **The Sacrifice** only its *second*

prize, the *Grand Prix Spécial du Jury* – and trying to make amends by also giving a well-deserved special award for artistic achievement to its remarkable cinematographer, Sven Nykvist.

There are some films that defy explanation, ever eluding the final definition, the reduction to something safe and "understandable." With **The Sacrifice**, we are in the realm of poetry, mystery, the ineffable. And the connotations, deep feelings at all levels go on spiraling. One is left with attempts at vague approximations, suggestions, convergences that, essentially, is the language of **The Sacrifice**.

Ingmar Bergman put it this way: "My discovery of Tarkovsky... was like a miracle, suddenly I found myself standing at the door of a room the keys of which had, until then, never been given to me. It was a room I had always wanted to enter and where he was moving freely and fully at ease. I felt encouraged and stimulated: someone was expressing what I had always wanted to say without knowing how Tarkovsky is for me the greatest, the one who invented a new language, true to the nature of film, as it captures life as a reflection, life as a dream."

One indeed is reminded of Bergman: **The Sacrifice** was made in Sweden; it was shot by Sven Nykvist; it stars Erland Josephson; and it uses nature, Sweden's natural beauty. Above all, it treats of the soul, existence, human destiny, life, dream, illusion, art, all Bergman staples. But then, one could perhaps just as justifiably have recourse to other evocations: Dostoyevsky, Shakespeare, Chekhov, or Russian Eastern Christian iconography.

The Sacrifice, ultimately, is wholly Tarkovsky, unique, special, the "war film", one guesses, that Bergman would have liked to have made when he directed **The Shame**. Our world today, our frail humanity threatened by power, madness, huddling on the edge of nuclear holocaust, crying out for meaningfulness, proclaiming a desperate hope, affirming the sacredness of life in spite of all – and all of it in a mysterious, poetic mode, inhabiting that unfathomable region where life/art and reality/dream/unreality converge in a filmic discourse that is at once totally open and yet totally affirmative of its author's conception of life – such is the stuff of **The Sacrifice**.

Cannes, then, did have its moment of grandeur. It was sadly a grandeur steeped in pathos, for everyone knew about Tarkovsky's critical illness (cancer). Recently reconciled with his 20-year-old son, who was permitted to leave the Soviet Union to visit his father, and who accepted the award in Cannes on behalf of his father, Tarkovsky has indeed given us his last will and testament, dedicating it to that son. **The Sacrifice's** ultimate word is, literally, the **Word**, including it in life, hope, and, yes, sacrifice.

That was the final image/feeling/idea I brought away from Cannes this year. It may seem strange to end a movie report on this note... But, what the heck, why not?

Amidst all the surrealistic and contradictory mix that makes up the Cannes kaleidoscope, 1986 was indeed rather special, a sign, one hopes, of things to come. We surely could do much worse.

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