

Flashback re-enacts guerrilla kidnaping

In 1970, Daniel Mitrione, a U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) employe was assassinated in Uruguay by leftist guerrillas. In his newest film, *State of Siege*, Costa-Gavras, a 40-year-old French director of Greek origins, has dramatized the political events of that assassination.

Yves Montand plays Philip Michael Santore, an AID agent who has been kidnaped, interrogated and finally executed by the guerrilla members of the country's National Liberation Movement.

After opening the film with the discovery of Santore's corpse, the bulk of the movie is a documentary-styled flashback, showing the week of events leading to his execution.

Costa-Gavras has said that his purpose in filmmaking is to expose contemporary political tension to a mass audience through suspenseful, hard-hitting and dramatic techniques. He has brilliantly attacked oppression, corruption and violence in his previous films, including evils from the political right in *Z* (1968) and from the left in *L'Veu* (1970).

In *State of Siege*, he is still dealing politically in terms of black and white, but shades of gray also begin to appear.

Certain governmental departments, primarily the highly organized and corrupt police, are still the bastards in the film.

But much of the Republic is presented so absurdly that Costa-Gavras nearly makes us laugh. The ineffective president tapes a nationwide address by reading from idiot cards, while the right wing of the Parliament pompously sputters like rich, blundering fools.

On the other hand, the guerrillas are intelligent, quiet and relatively peaceful. They would rather not kill Santore, but fear

greg lukow **key grip**

their efforts will be in vain if they weaken. But Costa-Gavras will not let us sympathize with them completely, for with the execution of Santore, they lose much of the admiration we had felt for their cause.

It is during their interrogation of him in a mock trial that we learn of Santore's involvement in aiding the military police during upheavals in Brazil and Santo Domingo in the 60s.

Montand remains somewhat perplexed during it all; his face betrays, if not his guilt, at least his knowledge of all the accusations. Yet we should remember that as he was training police to combat insurrection, he was only doing a job he believed in.

Throughout the film, Costa-Gavras offsets the political tension with an inquisitive press as they cover the events. O.E. Hasse is particularly effective as a wizened reporter who fully knows the implications behind it all.

And indeed, like a well-written news analysis, *State of Siege* methodically clicks off in no nonsense fashion.

Costa-Gavras and Franco Solinas have written an intelligent script. It is a film of straight forward finesse that is capable of provoking one to anger.

By showing a country and its people in chaos as armed troops take over the streets, and by showing a new AID official step off a plane to take Santore's place, already under the watchful eye of the guerrillas, Costa-Gavras does not leave us with much optimism. What he has left us with is another timely and penetrating motion picture.

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