

A 'Charming' Film on Anti-Semitism?

(Catholic Press Features)

New York — Can you have a "charming, warm, funny and charming" film about anti-Semitism?

The film reviewer for "Time" magazine looked at "The Two of Us" and answered his own seemingly-rhetorical question in the affirmative. What's more, this little film from France — which is quickly picking up steam as potentially the biggest foreign-language hit this year — is being regarded by many as more effective than many church sermons or documents on anti-Semitism.

"The Two of Us" is set in Vichy, France, during World War II. The Jewish parents of a precocious 8-year-old boy are fearful that his antics are a threat to the family's anonymity during the Nazi Occupation. A Catholic woman who is a friend of the family suggests that the boy be sent off to the country to live with her elderly parents.

The catch: the old man is himself anti-Semitic. So before he leaves for the country, the boy is given a Christian name, taught the Lord's Prayer and told to say it aloud every night, and warned not to reveal his true religion to the old man.

"By the end of the film," commented the "Catholic Film Newsletter" in its feature review, each has "discovered something about himself and the rest of humanity. So too does the audience."

The old man, it turns out, is really a harmless and tender-hearted French Catholic who simply believes that Jews are responsible for most of the woes of mankind and who lectures his little friend on some of the ways to spot a Jew, among them: "They smell bad."

At film's end, the Nazi threat has ended, the old man and the boy—having become fast friends—part sadly, the



In "The Two of Us," an old anti-Semitic French Catholic (Michel Simon) enjoys an outing with a new young friend (Alain Cohen), not knowing the boy is Jewish.

old man still not knowing that the boy is Jewish.

"The Two of Us" has captivated critics partly because the story it tells is true. The film's director, Claude Berri, lived through an identical adventure when he was a young boy in World War II. But there is also the matter of contemporary relevance, whether it be modern anti-Semitism or racial injustice (the old man in the film also strongly dislikes American Negroes).

"One of the unstated themes of the movie is the degree to which even the most catastrophic political developments can leave personal lives, particularly the private lives of children, virtually untouched—or touched in quite mysterious ways," remarked "The New York Times."

The film "is probably excellent for children who have

seen more violent pictures about war," it added. "The story impinges on peacetime childhood as well."

The young boy is played by Alain Cohen, who was chosen for the part from a Bar Mitzvah class. But the film, critics agree, has made a next-year Oscar contender out of 73-year-old Michel Simon, who won a best-actor award at the recent Berlin Film Festival for "The Two of Us" and who is considered one of France's outstanding performers, having made 140 films. (He has appeared in only one American film: "The Train," in which he appeared with Burt Lancaster and Paul Scofield as a cantankerous railroad engineer.)

During World War II, his home in France was taken over by the Gestapo, and although he had papers certifying his Catholic heritage, he

was accused of being a Jew and fled to Italy.

"The old man is authentic," Simon said of his role in "The Two of Us." "There were many people like this at the time. Most people listened to the Vichy broadcasts (which spouted anti-Semitism). And the ending, with the man's beliefs unchanged, is good because it remains in the realm of the documentary. Life is like that."

"If he had found out that the boy was Jewish, it would have broken his heart. It has never been demonstrated that anti-Semitism change. But there are not many in France today. Perhaps the conscience of the anti-Semite was a little upset by the toll of 6,000-000 Jews."

And thus far, he added, the city where "The Two of Us" has received its greatest reception is Berlin.

Books

The Eleventh Hour, Francois Houtart (Sheed and Ward; \$4.50)

In this work Abbe Houtart, the internationally recognized sociologist, maintains that the Church after the Council must itself be a revolutionary force. The Council stressed, with new urgency, the themes of human dignity, political and religious freedom, total commitment to the building of a truly human society. These values cannot be realized in many situations without a revolution—the overthrow of systems which war against or at least threaten these values, and the creation of new systems designed to promote and protect these values. Such a revolution, however, must also promote and protect these values and must take place within the Church.

Christ in the Thought of De Chardin, F. Bravo (University of Notre Dame Press; \$4.95)

The thought of Teilhard de Chardin is based on evolution; the Christ of Teilhard de Chardin is an evolutionary presence — completed only when the world is completed. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, anthropologist, scientist, poet, priest and philosopher, experienced the anguish of solitude, the inability to communicate with other philosophers or theologians. His attempts to equate the science of evolution with the Christ of the Gospel shaped the "Teilhardian Synthesis" — the inversion of seeming inconsistencies into self-evident truths.

Consequences: Truth and . . . Dan Berrigan (Macmillan; \$3.95)

This, Daniel Berrigan's first book to come out of a war, "dramatizes a most serious aspect of life: truth or consequences. What are the consequences of living truthfully in the world? What price is attached to the life of mind and

heart and hands, the stretching urgent impassioned will to be of us? What price to place one's body in the imponderable scales of man's fate?" This book formulates these questions and deals with them as "journeys," real and imaginary, that reflect the concerns that have made the author famous.

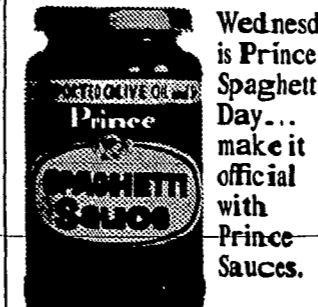
RECENT PAPERBACKS

Treat Me Cool, Lord by Carl F. Burke (Association Press; \$1.75). Author of "God Is for Real, Man." Prayers of kids from city streets, spoken in their own language.

The Restless Believers (Paulist Press; Daus Book; \$3.95). The problems of faith on the American campus.

Feed My Lambs by James P. Carroll (Pflaum; \$1.75). A beginner's guide for parents who want to prepare their children for the Eucharist and Penance.

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NCOMP Gives Films 'C' Rating

New York — (RNS) — Two films, one described as having a "salacious 'first,'" have been condemned by the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures.

The motion pictures, both distributed by American companies, are "Benjamin," a French film which carries the subtitles, "The Diary of an Innocent Young Boy"; and "I'll Never Forget What's 'Is Name," a movie which was refused a seal of approval by the Motion Picture Association of America.

The NCOMP comment on "I'll Never Forget What's 'Is Name" stated:

"This film is seriously delinquent in its introduction of a sequence of cannibalistic sex which can only be seen as yet another instance of the game of one-upmanship as it is played today by some movie-makers in the name of free expression.

Of "Benjamin," the NCOMP said:

"Though a handsomely mounted period piece, this film about the initiation of an innocent boy into the depraved society of 18th Century French aristocracy concentrates on suggestiveness and titillation at the expense of any meaningful comment, satirical or other."

Get it off your chest. Write a letter to the Editor. Remember to keep your letters clear and concise and limit them to 300 words.

2 to Be Ordained as Capuchins

Two members of the Capuchin Order of Friars Minor will receive Holy Orders June 1 with their St. Bernard's classmates.

Father Cyril Karlowicz, O.F.M. Cap., is from St. Isaac Jogues parish in East Hartford, Conn., and will concelebrate his first Mass there at noon on Sunday, June 9. He attended the sem-

inaries of his order at Geneva and Beacon, taking the final year here.

Father Francis Argentino, from the Brooklyn parish of St. Francis of Paola, followed a similar seminary course that included also a year at Glenciff, in Garrison. His first Mass will be at 1 p.m. Sunday, June 9, at his parish church.

ment said the Joystings had now completed their pioneering work and that there are now some 200 Salvation Army "pop" groups in Britain.

Salvation Army Famed Band To Be Broken Up

London — (RNS) — One of the world's best known religious bands, the Salvation Army's Joystings, will be disbanded in July.

On one occasion it captivated London city workers by playing on the steps of St. Paul's Cathedral.

A Salvation Army announcement said the Joystings had now completed their pioneering work and that there are now some 200 Salvation Army "pop" groups in Britain.

Irish Hymnal Uses Seeger, Dylan Tunes

Dublin — (RNS) — Peter Seeger's familiar melody, "Blowing in the Wind," has a new set of words in a hymnal being used by Irish congregations.

Written by Father Hubert Richardson, head of a catechetical training center, the new words focus on the unity of men in Christ and broaden the message of the protest song.

"How many times must the sick look up and find there is no one to care?" a typical line asks.

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