

Massive Reaction Building to 'Frank' Films

1969 may well be the year when the portrayal of nudity and sexual activity reached their ultimate extreme on the stages and screens of the United States. It will surely be the year when massive protest reaction began to set in.

Some critics felt that the March 10 opening of a Swedish film, "I Am Curious—Yellow," marked the most extreme possibility of sexual frankness in entertainment. There seemed no further possibilities of escalation.

"About all they have left to do now for shocks is actually to kill somebody on the stage," one New York theatre-goer was heard remarking.

Opposition to the new sexual freedom in entertainment was seen growing not only among religious groups but even among critics who have upheld the abolition of all forms of censorship in the past.

Most of the talk centered on "I Am Curious—Yellow," an import film which was seized by U.S. Customs and subsequently enjoyed a publicity surrounding its courtroom battle before it was rated acceptable.

But protests were widespread on a variety of social and entertainment innovations, including the mini-skirt to which many women have clung despite freezing weather and new fashion decrees—"Topless" styles have spread from entertainers and waitresses in some establishments to a growing number of private citizens.

On stage, nudity has been a prominent element in such off-Broadway productions as "Paradise Now" and "Dionysus in '69," not to mention one musical that has made a success on Broadway, "Hair."

Apologists for "I Am Curious—Yellow" mention its treatment of such subjects as youths' revolt and its biting critique of social conditions in Sweden. But it would be absurd to suppose that theater waiting lines two or three abreast stretched down the streets and around the corners because of these qualities.

The best-known fact about the picture is that it presents, for the first time on an American public theatre screen, an act of sexual intercourse in which the performers are shown full-length and completely nude.

Said William Wolf in Cue magazine: "The film is a landmark likely to permanently shatter many of our last remaining movie conventions. The director has proceeded on the premise that when people make love it is important to show them in the act for dramatic or comic purposes. . . . If this idea bothers you, I suggest you stay home. The sex scenes, although a minor portion of the film, may knock you out of your seat."

The jury in U.S. District Court decided against the film last May on three questions put to it by Judge Thomas F. Murphy: "Does the dominant theme appeal to prurient interests? Is the picture patently-offensive? Is it utterly without social values?"

In the U.S. Court of Appeals, however, a 2 to 1 decision set

aside the jury's verdict, opening the way for showing the picture in the U.S. In his dissenting opinion, Judge J. Edward Lumbard said that the effect of the decision was to say that "juries are not to be trusted." Judge Henry J. Friendly indicated that he did not personally approve of the film but said that a favorable verdict "is dictated by Supreme Court decisions."

Judge Paul R. Hays, who wrote the majority opinion, noted that the film shows sexual activity with "greater explicitness than has been seen in any other film produced for general viewing."

A warrant for a felony charge

has been issued in Miami against rock and roll singer Jim Morrison, a member of a group known as The Doors, for alleged indecent behavior during a performance before a group of some 8,000 teenagers on March 1. Mr. Morrison left the country before the warrant could be served on him.

According to the Miami Herald, Mr. Morrison "screamed obscenities from the bandstand, exposed himself" and assaulted officials of the organization that sponsored the performance.

Reaction to the incident was swift, not only from public officials but from teenagers themselves. An instant group of students was quickly organized

and plans made to sponsor a campaign of protest against public indecency by entertainers.

One objective of the campaign is to fill the Orange Bowl with 50,000 teenagers for a protest rally. "I would call on all teenagers to stand up and be counted if they feel like I do," said Mike Levesque, one of the young organizers of the movement.

The young crusaders for decency also plan peaceful demonstrations against entertainment they find unacceptable and will inform entrepreneurs of the kind of shows they prefer.

Although much of the problem of obscenity is centered in

New York and other large cities, it is also a nationwide challenge, as one crusading religious organization has discovered. Operation Yorkville began, as its name indicates, as an agency is one neighborhood of Manhattan, the Yorkville section of the island's Upper East Side. Its chief purpose was to keep hand-core pornography out of the hands of children. Its board of directors includes Protestant, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Jewish clergymen.

Interest in its activity was so widespread that last November Operation Yorkville became a national organization with a new name, "Morality in Media," and moved to larger quarters

The agency issues a monthly newsletter surveying current problems in the field, new legal decisions and similar information. It also sponsors each month a national "target" on the expression of public opinion.

Although many critics testified in court in favor of the film, one notable absentee in this case was Judith Crist, film critic of New York magazine and of the television show, "Today."

"I'm getting tired," said Miss Crist, "of movies that grind out the nudes and voyeurisms and intersperse them with simple-minded statements about Vietnam or pacifism and thus make

claim to being 'art' rather than 'exploitation' films." While her article, headlined "Sex Yes, Mediocrity No," does not echo all of the objections, religious spokesmen have to such films, it shows that the Churches in their opposition, are gaining influential allies.

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