

SANTIAGO, ITALIA

A FILM BY NANNI MORETTI



Sacher Film and Le Pacte present

SANTIAGO, ITALIA

A FILM BY NANNI MORETTI

80 min – Italy – 2018 – Flat – 5.1

INTERNATIONAL SALES

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SYNOPSIS

From September 1973, after the military coup led by General Pinochet, the Italian embassy in Santiago has hosted hundreds and hundreds of asylum seekers.

Through interviews with the protagonists, SANTIAGO, ITALIA tells the story of that dramatic period, during which some Italian diplomats have made possible the salvation of many human lives.

INTERVIEW WITH NANNI MORETTI

Excerpts from an interview with Mario Calabresi published in the Il Venerdì weekly supplement of La Repubblica on 30 November 2018

How did this film come about?

It all began in spring of last year: I was in Santiago for a conference and the Italian ambassador told me about two young diplomats who had decided to take in political dissidents. I learned of a magnificent Italian story of hospitality and courage—an example of how individuals can make a difference. It was a story that took place in my youth, and which made me think of the importance of the Chilean experience at the time—the figure of President Allende and then the upheaval of the coup. And so I started working, with forty hours of interviews not only about Chile but Italy as well, the country that provided the most support.

Why make a film on the Chilean coup d'état now?

People often asked me this question when I was filming, and I didn't really know how to answer them. Then, after we had finished shooting, Matteo Salvini became Minister of the Interior and I realized why I had made the film. I understood it after the fact.

There are moving testimonies about how Chileans were welcomed with open arms, offered work in the fields of Emilia and the factories of Milan, given Italian lessons, and how events with Andean music were organized to ease the feeling of nostalgia... Truly another Italy.

There are a lot of people who only associate the 1970s with terrorism, shackling them in the expression “Years of Lead,” but this is wrong—they were much more than that. I have to say, those years surprised me, and I experienced a rare moment of national pride. When we were editing, I realized that, without having planned it, the film begins by talking about Chili's past and—involuntarily, but not coincidentally—ends speaking about present-day Italy.

What were you doing at that time?

I was barely twenty—I went to demonstrations of solidarity with the Chilean people. I was a bit disenchanted, but I went to them all.

Why disenchanted?

I was a bit disappointed by a political experience that had lost steam and come to an end the year before. In my last years of high school, I was part of an extra-parliamentary group—a “moderate” one...

It was a group of libertarian Trotskyists that was less dogmatic than others and which published a very good journal called Soviet. At the time of the coup, I had just finished shooting my first short film on Super 8, *Defeat*. It told the story of a young extra-parliamentary militant against the backdrop of a huge metalworkers' demonstration.

Why does the Chilean coup d'état remain so significant for your generation?

There was a symmetry between the two countries: Christian Democracy, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, workers' councils, the socialist left, the revolutionary left (in Chile it really was). So, there was an immediate identification with what happened to the Chilean left. The coup really marked a lot of us: it was the end of a dream, after the left had taken power by way of free elections, not force, for the first time. It was hugely different from other socialist experiences—it was a joyous and democratic experiment. We were looking for an original solution that would not be like the soviet, Chinese, or even Cuban experiences. What's striking about the testimonies I collected during the interviews is the joy of that period. I didn't invite experts or historians to speak, but rather people who had lived this story fully—people who were there. You can also hear the suffering, the fear of those days in their voices. Many of them got shaken at some point and were unable to continue telling their story. After all these years, the wound is still open. And then there is the proven role that the United States and Kissinger played in the coup...

Despite that, you chose to include testimonies from members of the military.

I interviewed two of them who had very different experiences. One had been in the military all his life and was not accused of anything; the other was convicted of homicide and kidnapping, and is serving his sentence. They tell contradictory stories. The one in prison says, "we were obeying orders," while the other maintains that there "was no order from the military junta to torture" and defends the coup, saying that it served to "restore democracy." I didn't want to make a classically militant or activist documentary, but I wanted to give a voice to the villains, too. I decided to visit a prison and to hear how they justified these abnormal acts—I wanted to understand on a human level how they justified the atrocity of the coup.

What was the atmosphere in Santiago?

When I was filming, Michelle Bachelet was president and her administration was on the left. But now the right is in power and things are changing. In any case, Chileans talk about the coup and the dictatorship much more now than they did in the 1990s. The return of democracy was accompanied by a collective

repression. In order to move forward, they said: let's not speak of the years under the dictatorship, let's not provoke the military—they could always come back. Remember that after he lost the referendum in 1988, Pinochet continued leading the armed force for another ten years and was a senator for life until 2002. What's curious is that the right forgave Pinochet for everything— first of all, for the torture and human rights violations—but they didn't forgive him for stealing. He only lost the support of the right wing when his foreign accounts were discovered.

Throughout the film, you make repeated references and analogies between the two countries. Do you continue to see these now?

Chile today is a country divided in two, cultivating contrasting memories. There are people who celebrate the anniversary of the coup on September 11th by hanging the flag from their balcony. It's like in Italy, where up until 25 years ago, there was a common memory of anti-fascism and resistance. We lost this during the Berlusconi years, and since then there has been no common heritage of values shared by progressives and conservatives. This is worrying to me because we can, of course, be divided over political choices, but not over fundamental values. Now, though, irresponsibility is triumphant—this very Italian trait of not taking responsibility for what one says and does is very much in fashion.

At one point during the interview with the member of the military who is in Punta Pueco prison, you walk into the frame, and while he is saying that he hopes you do judge his experience, you grumble, "I am not impartial."

It was not intentional. The interview was over and it was an exchange that wasn't meant to be recorded. Today, as ever, we cannot be impartial. I have never been able to stand the idea that impartiality, that posing as a third party, should be a value. For too long, the blunders of the center-left have been equated with those of a man like Berlusconi, whose very character is at odds with what we call democracy, and yet who was at times considered a true head of state. I am not impartial regarding the coup d'état, and I cannot be impartial now. We cannot be impartial about what is happening now.

NANNI MORETTI

FILMOGRAPHY

DIRECTOR

- 2019 SANTIAGO, ITALIA
- 2015 MIA MADRE
- 2011 WE HAVE A POPE (HABEMUS PAPAM)
- 2006 THE CAIMAN (IL CAIMANO)
- 2001 THE SON'S ROOM (LA STANZA DEL FIGLIO)
- 1998 APRIL (APRILE)
- 1993 CARO DIARIO
- 1989 RED WOOD PIGEON (PALOMBELLA ROSSA)
- 1985 THE MASS IS ENDED (LA MESSA È FINITA)
- 1984 BIANCA
- 1981 SWEET DREAMS (SOGNI D'ORO)
- 1978 ECCE BOMBO
- 1976 I AM SELF SUFFICIENT (IO SONO UN AUTARCHICO)

SHORT MOVIES AND DOCUMENTARIES

- 2008 FILM QUIZ
- 2007 DIARIO DI UNO SPETTATORE
L'ULTIMO CAMPIONATO
- 2003 THE LAST CUSTOMER
- 2002 IL GRIDO D'ANGOSCIA DELL'UCCELLO PREDATORE
- 1995 IL GIORNO DELLA PRIMA DI CLOSE UP
- 1994 L'UNICO PAESE AL MONDO
- 1990 LA COSA
- 1974 COME PARLI FRATE ?
- 1973 PATÉ DE BOURGEOIS
LA SCONFITTA

ACTOR

- 2015 MIA MADRE
2011 WE HAVE A POPE (HABEMUS PAPAM)
2008 QUIET CHAOS (CAOS CALMO) d'ANTONELLO GRIMALDI
2006 THE CAIMAN (IL CAIMANO)
2004 TE LO LEGGO NEGLI OCCHI by VALIA SANTELLA
2001 THE SON'S ROOM (LA STANZA DEL FIGLIO)
1998 APRILE
1995 THE SECOND TIME (LA SECONDA VOLTA) by MIMMI CALOPRESTI
1993 CARO DIARIO
1991 THE YES MAN (IL PORTABORSE) by DANIELE LUCHETTI
1989 RED WOOD PIGEON (PALOMBELLA ROSSA)
1988 IT'S HAPPENING TOMORROW (DOMANI ACCADRA) by DANIELE LUCHETTI
1985 THE MASS IS ENDED (LA MESSA È FINITA)
1984 BIANCA
1981 SWEET DREAMS (SOGNI D'ORO)
1978 ECCE BOMBO
1977 FATHER AND MASTER (PADRE PADRONE) by PAOLO and VITTORIO TAVIANI
1976 I AM SELF SUFFICIENT (IO SONO UN AUTARCHICO)

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