



Hierarchy of Silence

IN THE excerpts from Mr. Piscator's introduction to the German edition of *The Deputy* (see box) the new play is called a substantive contribution toward mastering the past. Certainly, if one reads the six-hour version (Grove Press, \$5.95) its substance would seem irrefutably impressive. And its reminder that all individuals should oppose church or state instructions when they find the differences between official policy and personal conscience sufficiently enormous is helpful to all of us in determining our own future course of action.

The Broadway presentation of Rolf Hochhuth's play is less substantial than the book, not merely because it has been cut to three hours, but also because the emotional coloring the per-

formers bring to it obscures its subtlety.

After an opening glimpse of Jews being herded into Auschwitz, the play focuses almost entirely on the anguish of a young Catholic priest named Riccardo Fontana. We watch Riccardo, whose father happens to be the Vatican's financial adviser, as he first learns of Hitler's genocide atrocities. After helping a Jew escape, he returns to Rome without permission because he feels sure that his first-hand report will cause the Pope to make an effective statement specifically condemning the mass deportation and execution of Jews. But in talking with a sophisticated Cardinal, Riccardo is shocked to find Vatican diplomacy being placed above this urgent moral issue. A few months later Riccardo returns to Rome on the day

when the Germans are arresting Jews there, and he is suddenly heartened to hear news that these deportations are about to evoke a strong statement from the Pope. With his father he goes to congratulate the Pope on taking this stand, only to learn that the news is false. He then denounces the Pope for issuing such a weak general statement (and this statement is historically documented) that it gives Hitler carte blanche to continue with no further worry of interference. And so Riccardo voluntarily joins the Jews being deported to Auschwitz. There, a diabolic Nazi taunts him because, since the outset of these horrible mass exterminations, God has shown no sign that he disapproves, nor in fact has his deputy here on earth, the Pope. The Broadway version chooses to end minus the printed play's final scene and to use the device of an empty spotlighted space to suggest a deputy position left vacant by God, by the Pope, and by us.

In the hands of an experienced dramatist *The Deputy* could have been effective theater. But this is Mr. Hochhuth's first play, and he seems to have been more interested in presenting a partly documented, partly invented history lesson. As such, it is interesting and worth our attention in much the same way that the completely documented *In White America* is. Catholics may resent an unfavorable and not strictly accurate or very convincing portrait of Pope Pius XII more than they do that of the more remote Pope Leo X in *Luther*. But a playwright is justified in constructing a historical figure as he sees him, one designed to make his larger point. If he does that well, we will be stimulated into looking into the actual details of the story.

While in general the performances suffer from seeming calculated demonstrations of expected responses, Jeremy Brett has moments of touching sincerity as Riccardo, Emlyn Williams manages to look amazingly like the Pope, and Ron Liebman, as a sinister Gestapo officer, beautifully reflects the war-weary atmosphere of occupied Rome.

Producer-director Herman Shumlin has forthrightly complained about the efforts that have been made to suppress and sabotage his New York production. But perhaps the most truly shocking and therefore most truly valuable part of the opening-night experience was the sight of pickets dressed in Nazi storm trooper uniforms. They and other small-minded organizations who protest against *The Deputy* only help Mr. Shumlin by proving that the play's substance is far more penetrating and effective than the esthetics of its writing, construction, and performance entitle it to be. —HENRY HEWES.

ROLF HOCHHUTH'S *The Deputy* is one of the few substantive contributions toward mastering the past. Relentlessly it calls things by their names; it shows that no tale can be out of date when it was written with the blood of innocent millions; it apportions to the guilty their measure of guilt; it reminds all the participants that they could have made their decision, and that in fact they did make it even when they thought they did not.

The Deputy makes liars of all those who assert that a historical drama as a drama of decision is no longer possible because, given the faceless anonymity of socio-political patterns and pressures in an absurd construct of human existence that sees everything as predetermined, decisions as such are no longer possible for man. Such a theory, which blots out historic action, recommends itself to those who would like to escape the truth of history, the truth of their own historic acts.

Hochhuth's play aims at objectivizing, exploring the total human attitude, not in story but in history. It is an epic play for epic "political" theater, the theater for which I have fought for more than thirty years. It is a historical drama in Schiller's sense. It sees man as acting and, in his acting, representative ("deputy") of an *idea*—free in its fulfillment, free in his insight into the necessity of categorically ethical, essentially human behavior. This freedom that we all possess, that we all possessed under the Nazi régime as well, must be our point of departure if we wish to master our past. To disclaim this freedom would be to disclaim the guilt each took upon himself if he did not make use of his freedom to decide *against* inhumanity.

I hope that attack and defense of the play will reach *all*, as they have the few who have read it to date; I hope that the value of such a work lies not only in the artistic, the formal, the esthetic, but first and last in its words with and its reach into life; I hope this play will be a force *for change*. My anti-Schopenhauer optimism, despite natural wear through resignation, is still strong enough to believe in a change in human history through understanding—a peaceful change, not a violent material change that admits evolution henceforth as evolution exclusively toward catastrophe. But from objective recognition a passionate avowal of values can develop, for which Hochhuth attempts a new formulation in this play. This new author seems to me not only a good playwright and poet, but also a man confessing. The discovery of such a man is healing and consoling in a world of silence—silence that is empty, without content, useless.

—ERWIN PISCATOR, director of the original West Berlin Volksbühne production of *The Deputy* (translated by Clara Mayer).



Knock, Knock, What's There?

JOSEPH LOSEY, an American film director now based in England, has been knocking for several years on the door that opens to the directorial pantheon. Movies such as *Blind Date* and *The Criminal* were regarded as relatively small potatoes by his American distributors, since they were essentially melodramas, but they were obviously made by a man striving to break through his commercial limitations. When *The Servant* was shown at the first New York film festival, Losey and the absorbingly unusual film he had made probably won the informal honors, which came in discussion and comment afterward. Now on general view, *The Servant* is still a most remarkable work, photographed, acted, and directed with flair and style and haunting in its implications.

But let it be said at once that it offers more implication than solid meaning, that it tantalizes with glimpses into the erotic and the corrupt, with its portrayal of a heartless domination of one soul by another, with its suggestions of human evil. What it really *says*, however, must be inferred, and one man's inferences are about as good as another's. Its story deals with a rich young Englishman who has taken over a London town house and has advertised for a servant, a gentleman's gentleman. The man who applies, and is accepted, looks, behaves, and speaks like the very model of such a servant, but he turns out to be vicious, determined, wilful, and ruthless. Eventually the roles are reversed and the servant becomes the master through his ability to corrupt the inadequate chap he supposedly serves.

Because this process is shown subtly and atmospherically through the canny use of the camera, through dialogue that always glances off the specific statement, through bits of delicate satire, the viewer almost automatically reads his own meanings into the evidence the film presents. Most obvious, perhaps, is seeing it as symbolizing the decay of the British upper classes, their inability to adjust to present-day realities, and the ascent to power of other elements of society. The spoiled, effeminately handsome young scion of a rich family is entirely futile, an easy prey to someone who chooses to exploit him. For a fiancée he has a lovely upper-class girl who attempts to assert his "rights" of money and breeding for him, but she fails before the servant's superior wiles. In the end the young

householder is a dissolute pawn, helpless and sodden.

The servant has a tempting little mistress who soon wins the master away from his nice girl, substitutes herself, and then calmly returns to her real master, the servant. If the entangled young man should rebel, the servant returns temporarily to his soothing obsequiousness.

The actors give themselves wholeheartedly to this intense, steamy game—a game of luring, ensnaring, and destroying, done seemingly less for actual gain than for the satisfaction that comes out of humiliating someone whose pride is unbearable simply because it is pride that has no proper foundations. James Fox as the master, Dirk Bogarde as the servant, Wendy Craig as the rich girl, and Sarah Miles as the vixenish little tramp are all quite marvelous and absolutely fascinating to watch, yet they stop short when it comes to pinning down and fixing the people they play, for it seems to be part of everyone's intent to leave an edge of mystery. The difference between these fine actors is less a matter of skill than of vividness. Dirk Bogarde's servant and the girl developed by Sarah Miles are more striking, mainly because they are the heartless instigators and activators.

But Pinter's writing and Losey's direction, superior as these are, have left some loopholes where they can be attacked. Most important is that their drama has a tendency to run downhill. Put brutally, the master is a patsy. He puts almost nothing in the way of those who would turn him into human jelly, and he seems neither nice enough nor decent enough to worry about what happens to him. He's a quite useless fellow to begin with (which, of course, leads directly to that earlier supposition that it is a whole class that is being pilloried). Then, because so much of the film deals with the decay of his will, there seems an overemphasis on the details of corruption. If one doesn't care about a person, one tends to grow bored with his futile behavior. One is forced to wonder: if Pinter and Losey really came out and made clear what their movie, brilliantly enacted as it is, was all about, would we be as engrossed by it? My own nagging suspicion is that there is something of a trick involved here, a deliberate obfuscation for no good purpose. For me, Joseph Losey is still knocking at that door mentioned earlier. —HOLLIS ALPERT.

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