

Document Citation

Title	Ogro
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Source	<i>Variety</i>
Date	1979 Sep 19
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Ogro (Operation Ogre), Pontecorvo, Gillo, 1979

Ugro

(ITALO-FRENCH-SPANISH-COLOR)

Variety

— 9-19-79

Venice, Sept. 4.

Vides release of a Vides (Rome)-Sabre Films (Madrid)-Action Films (Paris) co-production. Produced by Franco Cristaldi and Nicola Carraro. Features entire cast. Directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. Screenplay, Pontecorvo, Ugo Pirro, Giorgio Arlorio; camera (Eastmancolor), Marcello Gatti; music, Ennio Morricone; editor Mario Morra. Reviewed at Venice Film Festival, Sept. 3, '79. Running time, 115 MINS.

Ezarra	Gian Maria Volonte
Txabi	Eusebio Poncela
Amajur	Angela Molina
Luken	Saverio Marconi
Iker	Jose Sacristan
Txikia	Feodor Atkin
Gutierrez	George Stacquet
Dolores	Isabel Garcia

Disappointing new film by Gillo Pontecorvo ("Battle of Algiers," "Kapo"), this Venice contender nevertheless scores as a political thriller with a modicum of suspense and an authentic "feel." Except in certain territories (Spain, Italy, perhaps Germany), where its terrorist topicality could provide a b.o. fillip, it nevertheless looms mainly as specialized fare needing an appropriately selective sell.

Pontecorvo has chosen one of the most clamorous political assassinations of recent years, that of Spanish Admiral (and dictator Franco's heir apparent) Carrero Blanco, as the focal point of a suspenser pitting a small group of Basque separatists against the Fascist

Spanish regime and its emerging figurehead. Plot which closely follows actual events has the subversive unit first planning to kidnap its target, then resorting to the killing — by literally blowing Blanco and his car into the Madrid sky — when his security coverage proves too tight.

Intertwined, but not sufficiently, are hints of internal friction about how violent the Basque campaign should be. In fact, one of the film's faults is the generally superficial handling of principal characters, whose motivations are only at times hinted at, and which seldom sufficiently involve the audience.

At its best, pic manages some tension in its graphic outline of the assassination plot (which involved digging a tunnel under a street, in which to plant the explosive charge which literally blew the official's car over the roof of an adjoining building), and the explosion itself is vividly rendered.

Some of the political messages, in which the film abounds, are instead proffered patly and flatly, and the drive and motivation behind the protagonists rarely grips or moves.

Acting, with some minor exceptions, is similarly wooden and uninvolving, while editing is crisp, music nicely attuned to action and setting, and location photography grimly evocative of actual times and settings. —Hawk.