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Author(s)	D. S. Moore
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# NO END IN SIGHT

BY D.S. MOORE

As has happened before, the surprises of this year's New York Film Festival were more impressive than its expected hits. Alexander Kluge's *The Blind Director* (Germany) is a wonderfully obtuse, non-narrative exploration of image, language and character. Kluge's patient and fluid style lifts this semiotic statement on modern life into comedy with a cynical sense of humor. But Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* (Sweden, France), a highly awaited work by a supposed master, proved to be a case of The Emperor's clothes. Nobody at an arty film festival like New York's wants to be the one to point a finger and say: "this film is a pretentious, incoherent mess." However, Sven Nykvist's world-class camerawork and some stirring philosophical soliloquies by Tarkovsky's main character were not enough to make sense of *The Sacrifice's* confused, self-indulgent screenplay. *The Sacrifice* might have been this year's *Ran*; instead, it was a major disappointment.

One of the six French films at the Festival was *Police*, a dispassionate examination of a Parisian cop (played by the omnipresent Gerard Depardieu) who constantly descends to the level of the drug dealers and whores he badgers, but feels no moral ambivalence. *Police*, directed by Maurice Pialat (who directed and starred in the critically acclaimed *A Nos Amours* in 1983), is sort of an anti-thriller; it's remarkable as much for what it isn't as for what it is. American movie and T.V. audiences are so accustomed to violent, thrill-a-minute cop shows that *Police*, with no car chases or fiery explosions, comes almost as a revelation. The violent interrogations in *Police* are clinically shot, and the acts of violence are both calculated and meaningful. Pialat provides a shot of truth for violence-numbed American audiences.

The force of *Police* is heightened dramatically by Pialat's directing technique, which is resolute, impassive and exquisitely controlled. *Police* even works as a love story. Depardieu and Sophie Marceau, who plays a beautiful, pouty, drug dealer's girlfriend, spend a night together driving around Paris, living out an entire love affair in a few hours: desiring, yearning, hesitating, then communing. It's a touching moment in a cool, unburied film.

Another French film which should enjoy a long commercial run in New York is

**The violent interrogations in *Police* are clinically shot, and the acts of violence are both calculated and meaningful. Pialat provides a shot of truth for American audiences.**

*Scene of the Crime*, Andre Techine's lush, romantic, ode to his boyhood in southwestern France. Techine describes his home town as one in which "anyone who didn't conform to social expectations was frowned upon." The director says he wanted to write a screen-

play in which "people refused to conform, regardless of the consequences." *Scene of the Crime* provides Catherine Deneuve with one of her most passionate, sensual roles, as a woman separated from a husband who won't let her be. She and her son buck the social system of the town and find themselves in an ever-deepening predicament. In a scene taken from Dicken's *Great Expectations*, the moody, insolent boy (who takes after his mother) is frightened into helping to escaped convicts he finds by the riverside. Several plot twists later, Deneuve falls into protecting one of the (handsome) young convicts, and then falls in love with him. Danielle Darrieux as the uncomprehending mother of Lili (Deneuve) is the calm center around which mother and child's troubled passions turn. Techine shoots with a conventional yet very beautiful style; he has an eye for character and a strong instinct for human chemistry. *Scene of the Crime* is a lovely, tempered movie about two favorite French subjects: passion and obsession. The musical score by Phillippe Sarde is classical and handsome, as is the rural scenery.

There are two consistent truisms about Eastern European films. The first is that they rarely receive the attention their generally high quality deserves, and the second is that to discuss them almost invariably involves discussing the political and social environments from which they spring. *No End* is no exception. Of the ten features I saw at the festival, Krzysztof Kieslowski's 1984 film is in many respects the best, but it will continue to be undervalued by audiences and critics. *No End* is strong, well-crafted, impassioned and darkly beautiful. But Eastern European films are often too political, too serious and too bleak to be construed as viable entertainment. Many of these films are more like cries for help.

*No End*, for example, is the sole film about the period of martial law in Poland which the Polish government has allowed to be made and distributed. Even so, the film is already two years old and just now being seen in the West. And the picture Kieslowski presents of martial law is not nearly as bleak as it might have been. (A fate which the director freely admits, but Kieslowski also explains that anything more damning in the eyes of the Government would never have seen the light of day.) *No End* is a fine, dramatic film with an emotional resilience. ♦