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AN OFFICER AND A SPY

A FILM BY
ROMAN POLANSKI

PLAYTIME PRESENTS
A PRODUCTION BY LEGENDE & R.P. PRODUCTIONS



JEAN DUJARDIN

LOUIS GARREL | EMMANUELLE SEIGNER | GREGORY GADEBOIS

AN OFFICER AND A SPY

(J'ACCUSE)

A FILM BY **ROMAN POLANSKI**

FRANCE, ITALY | 1.85 | 132 MIN

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VENICE SCREENINGS

Press & industry screenings:

Fri 30 | 8:30 AM | Sala Darsena

Fri 30 | 11:15 AM | Sala Grande

Festival screenings:

Fri 30 | 7:15 PM | Sala Grande (**Official Premiere**)

Fri 30 | 8:30 PM | Palabiennale

Sat 31 | 10:30 AM | Palabiennale



SYNOPSIS

On January 5, 1895, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a young promising officer, is degraded for spying for Germany and is sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island. Among the witnesses to his humiliation is Georges Picquart, who is promoted to run the military counter-intelligence unit that tracked him down. But when Picquart discovers that secrets are still being handed over to the Germans, he is drawn into a dangerous labyrinth of deceit and corruption that threatens not just his honour but his life.

INTERVIEW WITH

ROMAN POLANSKI

BY PASCAL BRUCKNER

Roman Polanski, can you explain your desire to make a film about the Dreyfus Affair, about the symbolic turning-point it represented in the history of France and Europe?

Big stories often make great films, and the Dreyfus Affair is an exceptional story. The story of a man unfairly accused is always fascinating, but it is also very much a current issue, given the upsurge in anti-Semitism.

What is the origin of the film?

When I was very young, I saw the American film *The Life of Emile Zola* and was shaken by the scene in which Captain Dreyfus is disgraced. Even back then, I said to myself that one day I might make a film about that terrible story.

You encountered a number of setbacks before you were able to make the film. The first was which language to make it in, since the first producers you discussed the project with wanted it to be in English.

When I proposed the project seven years ago to my friends and associates at the time, they were excited about the idea but thought it essential to make the film in English to ensure its financing by international distributors, especially in America.

It is true that American films set in France are invariably made in English - indeed *The Life of Emile Zola* is a case in point. The films were easier to sell on international markets. Even Stanley Kubrick made *Paths of Glory*, his film on World War I, in English.



But personally I couldn't really see all these French generals speaking English. Today's audience is more sophisticated and more willing to watch films and TV series in their original language with subtitles.

Alain Goldman eventually offered to produce the film in French.

That's right. Last year, in January 2018, Alain Goldman offered to produce the film in French. I was delighted, of course! It was the beginning of our great adventure. We started filming in November. And now here we are!

How did you work on the project?

Robert Harris and I had just finished *The Ghost Writer*. Robert was very enthusiastic about the idea so we got down to work straight away. At first, it seemed obvious to us that we should tell the story from Dreyfus's perspective, but we soon realised that it wasn't going to work: all the action, with its many characters and twists and turns, took place in Paris, whereas our central character was stuck on "Devil's Island". The only story we could have told would have been about his suffering.

We wrestled with the problem for a long time and eventually, after more than a year's work, Robert found the solution to our dilemma: it was best to leave Dreyfus on his rock and tell the story from the point of view of Colonel Picquart, one of the main characters in the story. But we also had to earn a living, so we decided to put the project on the backburner while I made another film and Robert wrote a novel about the Dreyfus Affair.

He worked on the subject for a year and his book *An Officer and a Spy* (the French title, *D*), is a little puzzling), based on thorough historical research, soon became a best-seller. In the meantime, I finished *Venus in Fur* and when we came back to our story we knew how we wanted to tell it.



How did the casting go?

Jean Dujardin seemed perfect for the role of Picquart. He looks like Picquart, he's the same age and he's a great actor. A film of this importance needs a star and Jean Dujardin is one – he didn't get an Oscar for nothing! So he was a natural choice for us, we just had to see whether he was interested in the project. In fact, he was eager to do it.

So your narrative choice is to make Colonel Picquart the main character. At the time, this unmarried man, with a mistress (played by Emmanuelle Seigner) married to a high state official, is a social outsider and a "natural anti-Semite", the way people were in the late 19th century. Yet he is the one who unintentionally saves Captain Dreyfus.

Picquart is a fascinating and complex character. He is not an active anti-Semite. He doesn't like Jews, but that's more out of tradition than belief. As a counter-intelligence officer, when he finds out that Dreyfus is innocent, he very much takes the case to

heart and decides to uncover the truth.

When he tells his commanding officers, he is ordered to keep quiet: the army would never make such mistakes! Despite the fiasco of 1870, the army, just like the Church, is sacrosanct. It doesn't care a fig if soldiers feel remorse or find themselves facing a moral dilemma: it is above Truth and Justice.

What makes Picquart contradict the official version? The purity of his moral principles or obedience to the military ethos?

In the film, there is a memorable conversation between Picquart and Major Henry, his main opponent. Henry says: "You order me to kill a man, and I do it. You tell me it was a mistake, sorry, but it's not my fault. That's the Army." To which Picquart responds: "It may be your army, Major, but it's not mine."

This exchange reflects a reality which is still relevant today. Soldiers are obliged to kill for their country. But if a crime is thereby committed, they are not obliged to cover it up.

Colonel Picquart finds himself in roughly the same predicament as Dreyfus: imprisoned, his affair exposed and accused of treason by the far right.

Because he chose to follow his own conscience and his need to know the truth rather than obey the military ethos. It starts with a doubt when he discovers similarities between Esterhazy's writing and the writing on the covering note that was recovered from the German Embassy, the famous "bordereau", and then doubt gradually leads to an investigation. Picquart continues despite being told to stop and ends up discovering further evidence of Esterhazy's guilt. The more he finds out, the more horrified he becomes at the magnitude of their mistake.

The father of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), a Lithuanian bookseller, apparently advised him to move to France, arguing that “a country which can tear itself apart over the honour of a little Jewish captain is one to which a righteous person should hurry to go”.

It's true, at the time there were *anti-Dreyfusards* but there were also *Dreyfusards*! And Dreyfus was eventually proved innocent. So France eventually comes out of the affair relatively well, even if the case was only resolved after twelve years and almost plunged the country into civil war.

Another challenge for the film is to introduce the Dreyfus Affair to young people who are not familiar with it.

To begin with, when I was asked about my projects and I said I was working on the Dreyfus affair, everyone thought that was great. But I soon realised that not many people knew what had really happened. It's one of those historical events which everybody thinks they know about while being unaware of the real substance.

In this respect, the film is highly educational because it allows everyone, including those who know nothing about the case, to understand the political and philosophical challenge that Picquart faces. It is almost a police investigation.

I would even call it a thriller! The story is told entirely subjectively. The audience shares each step of the investigation with Picquart. And yet all the key events are authentic, as are many of the words spoken, because they are taken from the contemporary records.



Another thing that struck me in the film was the pitiful state of the French counter-intelligence service at the time, the Statistics Unit where informants play cards while drinking alcohol, the porter is half asleep, surveillance seems hapless and the dilapidated technical resources can only surprise the modern audience. There is a technology shock compared with what we know today about counter-intelligence.

That too is authentic, and doubtless seemed modern then. It was the time of the first cars, the first telephones and Kodak cameras! Here too, the research carried out by Robert Harris for his book has been extremely valuable. On the other hand, this technological hubris caused some investigators, like the notorious expert, Bertillon, to make fundamental mistakes and then refuse to change their minds.

One piece of evidence, which first points to Dreyfus's guilt and then eventually clears him, is the existence of the bordereau.

It is a torn-up letter, filched from the bin in the office of the military attaché at the German Embassy. In it, a French officer offered to provide the Germans with information on military secrets, including the 120 gun. The French army was very sensitive to this kind of leak since it was keeping secret a new model, the 75 gun, a recoilless gun barrel designed to absorb the impact of the shot, which represented a significant advance.

There is the hostility of public opinion, of Major Henry who wants to take Picquart's place, of the military staff, and then there are all those who want to help Dreyfus, like Émile Zola and Clemenceau.

It was Zola who brought the case to light with his famous *J'accuse* ("I accuse"), a letter sent to the

President of the French Republic and published in the newspaper *L'Aurore*. Without it, who knows how the case would have ended. Clemenceau also played a significant part. Seven years after the end of the affair, when he was himself Prime Minister, he appointed Picquart as Minister of War.

Zola paid a heavy price for his commitment since he was sentenced to a year in prison and a fine of 3,000 French francs. He died asphyxiated by the smoke from his fireplace; some people say he was murdered by *anti-Dreyfusards*. In any case, Edouard Drumont's anti-Semitic newspaper, *La Libre Parole*, was jubilant at the news of his death.

In your film, we can also see a few placards with the words "Death to the Jews". Anti-Semitism has not disappeared, it has shifted, taken on a different face, become a matter more for left-wing extremists, enemies of Israel and radical Islamists. Do you believe that a new Dreyfus Affair could happen today or does that seem unthinkable to you?

With today's technology, it would be impossible to have a case in which a person was convicted on the basis of flawed handwriting analysis. And certainly not in the army, since the army's mindset has changed. It is no longer "sacrosanct". Today, we are allowed to criticise anything, including the army, whereas back then it had unrestricted power. But another affair is possible, definitely. All the ingredients are there for it to happen: false accusations, lousy court proceedings, corrupt judges, and above all "social media" that convict and condemn without a fair trial or a right of appeal.

As a Jew who was hunted during the war and a filmmaker persecuted by the Stalinists in Poland, will you survive the present-day neo-feminist McCarthyism which, as well as chasing

you all over the world and trying to prevent the screening of your films, among other vexations got you expelled from the Oscars Academy?

Working, making a film like this helps me a lot. In the story, I sometimes find moments I have experienced myself, I can see the same determination to deny the facts and condemn me for things I have not done. Most of the people who harass me do not know me and know nothing about the case.

Was this film like a catharsis for you?

No, I don't work like that. My work is not therapy. However, I must admit that I am familiar with many of the workings of the apparatus of persecution shown in the film, and that has clearly inspired me.

The persecution you experience started with Sharon Tate?

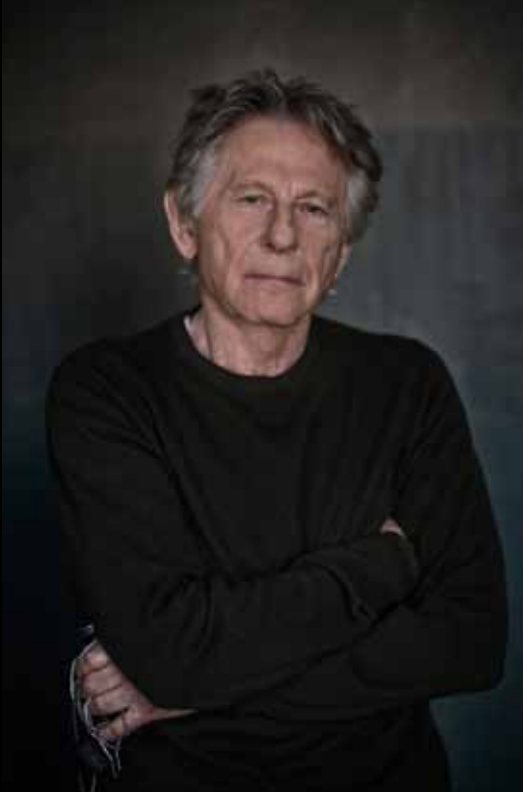
The way people see me, my "image", did indeed start to form with Sharon Tate's death. When it happened, even though I was already going through a terrible time, the press got hold of the tragedy and, unsure of how to deal with it, covered it in the most despicable way, implying, among other things, that I was one of the people responsible for her murder, against a background of satanism. For them, my film *Rosemary's Baby*, proved that I was in league with the devil! It lasted several months, until the police finally found the real killers, Charles Manson and his "family". All this still haunts me today. Anything and everything. It is like a snowball, each season adds another layer. Absurd stories by women I have never seen before in my life who accuse me of things which supposedly happened more than half a century ago.

Don't you want to fight back?

What for? It's like tilting at windmills.



ROMAN POLANSKI



Polanski was born in Paris to Polish parents who returned to Poland just before the Second World War. He began his career as a child actor and, later was admitted to the Polish National Film School, in Lodz, where he directed his first short films, including *Two Men and A Wardrobe* and *The Mammals* both winning prizes at various Film Festivals.

His first feature film, *Knife in the Water* (1962), won the Critic's Award at the Venice Film Festival and was nominated for an Oscar as the Best Foreign Language Film. *Repulsion* (1965) his first film in English, won the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival, and, subsequently *Cul-de-Sac*, won the Golden Bear.

Rosemary's Baby (1968) was his first film made in Hollywood. It was a huge critical and box office success and earned him an Oscar Nomination for Best Screenplay. In 1975, he won the Golden Globe for Best Director and 11 Oscar Nominations for *Chinatown*.

His CV also includes *Tess* (1979 – an Oscar Nomination for the Best Director), *Frantic*, *Bitter Moon*, *Death and the Maiden*, *Oliver Twist*, *The Ghost Writer* and *Carnage*.

In 2002, with his film *The Pianist*, Polanski won an Oscar and the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival.

ROMAN POLANSKI

FILMOGRAPHY

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|---|
| 2019 | An Officer and a Spy (J'accuse) | 1972 | What? (Che?) |
| 2017 | Based on a True Story (D'après une histoire vraie) | 1971 | Macbeth |
| 2013 | Venus in Fur (La Vénus à la fourrure) | 1968 | Rosemary's Baby |
| 2012 | A Therapy - Short film | 1967 | The Fearless Vampire Killers |
| 2011 | Carnage | 1966 | Cul-de-Sac |
| 2010 | The Ghost Writer | 1965 | Repulsion |
| 2007 | Cinéma Erotique in To Each His Own Cinema (A chacun son cinéma) | 1964 | La Rivière de diamants in The Most Beautiful Swindels (Les plus belles...) |
| 2005 | Oliver Twist | 1962 | Mammals (Ssaki) - Short film |
| 2002 | The Pianist | | Knife in the Water (Noz w wodzie) |
| 1999 | The Ninth Gate | 1961 | The Fat and the Lean - Short film |
| 1994 | Death and the Maiden | 1959 | The Lamp (Lampa) - Short film |
| 1992 | Bitter Moon (Lunes de fiel) | | When Angels Fall (Gdy spadaja anioly) - Short film |
| 1988 | Frantic | 1958 | Two Men and a Wardrobe (Dwaj Ludzie z szafa) - Short film |
| 1986 | Pirates | 1957 | Bicycle (Rower) - Short film |
| 1979 | Tess | | Smile (Uśmiech Zebiczny) - Short film |
| 1976 | The Tenant (Le Locataire) | | Break-up the Dance (Rozbijemy Zabawe) - Short film |
| 1974 | Chinatown | | Murder (Morderstwo) - Short film |

INTERVIEW WITH

JEAN DUJARDIN

This new film by Roman Polanski tells the story of the Dreyfus Affair from the point of view of Colonel Picquart, a forgotten hero and your character. Did you know about this key yet little-known figure?

The Dreyfus Affair was a major historical event that profoundly affected and divided French society. It's one we have all referred to and believe ourselves to be familiar with, though in fact we know little about it. Roman Polanski decided to tell the story from the perspective of Georges Picquart, a crucial character. I wasn't aware of his story. Picquart was the youngest Lieutenant-Colonel in history. He came from Alsace, just like Dreyfus. During the case, Georges Picquart is caught in a vice between his loyalty to the army and the truth. Catholic belief and anti-Semitic sentiment held sway in France at the time and the country had no intention of relinquishing power. It was a country where the army occupied a central position. Picquart has a moral conscience as well as an obligation of duty: overcome with doubt, he is brave enough to sacrifice his career for the truth. I have already played dramatic roles, but this character offered new density and subtlety.

How did you study the role before filming started?

I prepared myself as Roman requires, with great care and attention to detail. I learned my text very accurately so that I would be able to respond to his direction as fully as possible. I immersed myself in the text for two months. I worked with a rehear-



sal coach and shut myself away. I rehearsed until my head started spinning, so that I would be fully confident afterwards. Since Roman is a very technical filmmaker, I needed to be like that in my acting. He breaks codes and conventions, you need to adapt to the way he works. For him I worked on cold anger, a controlled emotion rarely demanded of an actor. You need to be accurate with the text, precise in your acting and flexible so that you can adapt to his direction. The text of *An Officer and a Spy* is literary in style, full of pitfalls. You have to be able to chew it, swallow it and get it back out without thinking. If Roman had offered me the role five years ago, I'm not sure I would have dared to accept it. In fact, to my own surprise, I found myself in an extremely focused and concentrated, almost meditative state, and liking it.

I also had to work on my body. Roman wanted me to get toned, to have a more clearly defined figure. He was right. It made me look both younger and more like a soldier, more warlike.

During the filming you wore a uniform from the period. Did it help you in your role or influence your acting?

I have been comfortable in military dress since my role as Captain Neuville in *Return of the Hero (Le Retour du Héros)* by Laurent Tirard in 2017. But either way, I don't play a costume. I can rely on the uniform, lean on the dress. The aim is not to paraphrase or overact the costume since it is already there. I draw my inspiration not from the costume but from references, my life and past experience. I don't hide behind created characters as much as I used to. Comedy is like a muscle. Here we are closer to the bone.

In what conditions was the film made?

Roman had this project inside him for the past ten years. He said very little about the origin of his choice; he's a private person, reserved. We filmed from November 2018 until the end of April, for nearly 75 days. It was a very long shoot: it is unusual for filming to take so long. For almost six months I led a monastic, strict life which sometimes contrasted with the emotional power of the shoot. My most striking memory was the scene at the Court House in Paris, the same place where General Pétain's trial was held in 1945. During the scene, I am on the stand facing 400 extras. I felt a very unique emotion.

Roman asked a lot from me, a kind of introspection into my acting, myself and who I am. I was very focused during filming, extremely focused. Roman demands that kind of concentration.

This is the first time you worked with Polanski. How did you approach your work together?

Polanski is the first master I have ever met. He is a filmmaker who demands from others the same extreme precision he requires from himself. You need to follow him and never drift off, otherwise he'll be on your back: he sticks his nose in everywhere, into every aspect of the filming process. Roman is a man who studied fine arts: he sets up his shots just like paintings. Every detail needs to be perfect: the drapes in a room, a branch in a forest, and so on. He has this attention to detail in the directing of actors. You can rehearse a scene thirty times before filming it, to ensure sincerity.

Roman is a complex and demanding person who won't let anything deflect him from his path. He has to see the project through to the end. He needs to go out and find the truth. *An Officer and a Spy* is a fundamental film for him, just like *The Pianist*. This is not about making a film: he lives his story and takes us with him. I love that. I am there to serve the story.

An Officer and a Spy is a multifaceted film, not just a historical film. How would you define it?

Polanski is a filmmaker obsessed with one question: how can he tighten up the plot and firm up the film until all that is left is pure substance? Roman is not an adept of pretentious and boring historical re-enactments. *An Officer and a Spy* is an unapologetically modern film, a thriller of its time. It's unusual. It is also a necessary film, conditioned by its time. We had to shoot scenes where people were burning Zola's books in the middle of the street, because of his support for Alfred Dreyfus. They were shot just two days after anti-Semitic graffiti - *Juden!* ("Jews") - were sprayed on Bagelstein, a Jewish-owned bakery in Paris. Throughout the entire production, we were aware of echoes with the present day, when anti-Semitism has taken on different faces. It is a film that should be viewed in schools: it shows courage and integrity.



JEAN DUJARDIN

RECENT FEATURE FILMS

- 2019 **An Officer and a Spy** by Roman Polanski
Deerskin (Le Daim) by Quentin Dupieux
Little White Lies 2 (Nous finirons ensemble) by Guillaume Canet
- 2018 **I Feel Good** by Benoît Delépine & Gustave Kervern
Return of the Hero (Le Retour du Héros) by Laurent Tirard
- 2017 **Everyone's Life (Chacun sa vie)** by Claude Lelouch
Sahara by Pierre Coré
- 2016 **Brice 3** by James Huth
Up for Love (Un homme à la hauteur) by Laurent Tirard
- 2015 **Un + Une** by Claude Lelouch
- 2014 **The Connection (La French)** by Cédric Jimenez
The Monuments Men by George Clooney
- 2013 **The Wolf of Wall Street** by Martin Scorsese
9-Month Stretch (9 mois ferme) by Albert Dupontel
Möbius by Eric Rochant
- 2012 **The Players (Les Infidèles)**
- 2011 **The Artist** by Michel Hazanavicius
Winner of an Oscar, a Golden Globe,
a BAFTA Award and the Cannes Best Actor Award.
- 2010 **A View of Love (Un balcon sur la mer)** by Nicole Garcia
Little White Lies (Les petits mouchoirs) by Guillaume Canet
The Clink of Ice (Le bruit des glaçons) by Bertrand Blier
- 2009 **Lucky Luke** by James Huth
OSS 117: Lost in Rio (OSS 117: Rien ne répond plus)
by Michel Hazanavicius
- 2008 **Ca\$h** by Eric Besnard
- 2007 **99 Francs** by Jan Kounen
Counter Investigation (Contre-enquête) by Franck Mancuso
- 2006 **OSS 117: Cairo, Nest of Spies (OSS 117: Le Caire, nid d'espions)**
by Michel Hazanavicius
- 2005 **Il ne faut jurer... de rien!** by Eric Civanyan
L'amour aux troussees by Philippe de Chauveron
Brice de Nice by James Huth
- 2004 **Mariages!** by Valérie Guignabodet
Cash Truck (Le Convoyeur) by Nicolas Boukhrief



CAST

Jean Dujardin

Louis Garrel

Emmanuelle Seigner

Grégory Gadebois

Hervé Pierre de la Comédie Française

Wladimir Yordanoff

Didier Sandre de la Comédie Française

Melvil Poupaud

Eric Ruf de la Comédie Française

Mathieu Amalric

Laurent Stocker de la Comédie Française

Vincent Perez

Michel Vuillermoz de la Comédie Française

Vincent Grass

Denis Podalydès de la Comédie Française

Damien Bonnard

Laurent Natrella de la Comédie Française

Bruno Raffaelli de la Comédie Française

Picquart

Alfred Dreyfus

Pauline Monnier

Henry

Général Gonse

Général Mercier

Général Boisdeffre

Maitre Labori

Sandherr

Bertillon

Général de Pellieux

Maître Leblois

du Paty de Clam

Général Billot

Maître Demange

Desvernine

Esterhazy

Judge Delegorgue

CREW

Director **Roman Polanski**
Producer **Alain Goldman**
Coproducers **Luca Barbareschi & Paolo del Brocco**
Screenwriters **Robert Harris & Roman Polanski**
Based on the book by **Robert Harris**
Music Composer **Alexandre Desplat**
Director of Photography **Pawel Edelman, PSC**
Editor **Hervé de Luze**
Production Designer **Jean Rabasse, ADC**
Costume Designer **Pascaline Chavanne**
1st Assistant Director **Hubert Engammare**
Casting **Michaël Laguens**
Sound **Lucien Balibar**
Aymeric Devoldere
Cyril Holtz
Visual Effects **Jérémie Leroux**
Alain Carsoux
Hair & Make-up **Agathe Dupuis**
Vesna Peborde
Cédric Kerguilec
Production Manager **Cyrille Bragnier**
Executive Producers **Roman Abramovich**
Zbigniew Raczyński
Lukasz Raczyński
Kasia Nabialczyk
Constantino Margiotta
Associate Producers **Axelle Boucaï**
Axel Décis

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In coproduction with **GAUMONT**

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International Sales **PLAYTIME**

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france-tv **OCS** **CANAL+** **îledeFrance** **Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée** **SOPHICAL PALATINE ETOILE** **PLAYTIME**

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