

# THE FILM DESK



**Alain Resnais'**

# LA GUERRE EST FINIE

**North American Theatrical Premiere of  
New 4K Restoration  
Opens August 26 at Film Forum, New York**

France, 1966, 121 min.  
Directed by Alain Resnais  
Starring Yves Montand, Geneviève Bujold, Ingrid Thulin  
Screenplay by Jorge Semprún  
A Film Desk Release  
Restored by Gaumont, with support of the CNC

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## ***LA GUERRE EST FINIE* - Overview**

Exiled Spaniard Carlos (aka Diego) lives in Paris under a false identity where the anti-Franco Spanish Communists have their base of operations. He is a party leader, and regularly runs risky trips across the border to Spain with false passports that change from one trip to another. If he were to be arrested in Spain he would be executed, so each trip is a test of his courage and his nerves. He speaks French and Spanish without a tinge of an accent, and is a tall slim dapper dresser who could pass for a prosperous businessman. At the same time, these clandestine crossings are the only opportunity he has to visit his beloved Spain. Most of his comrades have been stuck living in exile in the Parisian outskirts for nearly three decades, since the late 1930s.

Carlos (Yves Montand, one of Jorge Semprún's real life closest friends), is weary and frustrated after years of anti-Franco activities. He has lost interest in the struggle, and his comrades' tactics and strategies don't seem to add up to anything. He knows both how much and how little ground their revolutionary activities have gained, because he is one of the few who moves between both countries and sees Spanish life first hand. Increasingly disillusioned, Carlos continues his dissident work. He soldiers on, his determination reignited by meeting a young organizer in a cell that advocates violence tactics, and by a chance to save a comrade's life, though still exhausted by years of secrecy, double lives, and the permanent alienation from the free Spain of his youth, which has become an intangible dream.

*La Guerre est finie* is an autobiographical screenplay based on the life of Jorge Semprún. The story takes place over a period of three days. Rejected by Cannes so as not to offend Franco's government, the film went on to win the prestigious Prix Louis Delluc, the New York Film Critics Circle award for Best Foreign Language Film, and Semprún's screenplay was nominated for an Academy Award. The restoration of *La Guerre est finie* premiered at the 2021 Cannes Film Festival in the Classics section.

## ***Historical Context***

In 1936, Spain was a relatively peaceful democracy with a popular front government. The royal family left the country in 1931, and Spain became a Republic (known as the Second Spanish Republic). On July 18, 1936, Francisco Franco and other rebel generals launched a right wing coup, backed by Hitler and Mussolini, that left tragic historical scars, most infamously, the Luftwaffe bombing of the Basque village of Guernica on a market day. This was the first example of civilians, largely women and children, targeted by the modern technological warfare of a foreign country, Nazi Germany, and famously immortalized by Picasso with his painting, Guernica.

Much of the world media and politicians expressed horror and concern at the Fascist invasion of Spain. But privately, many leaders were worried that the Soviet Union would back Spain's democratic government and turn the country into a satellite of the USSR. This was one of the right wing propaganda machine's favorite lines. Franco and his rebels accused the legitimate Spanish government of being the embodiment of anti-Catholic evil, and tagged them as a "Judeo-Bolshevik-Masonic conspiracy".

Franco's right-wing PR machine was so effective, and other democratic countries so afraid of having either the Fascists or the Soviets as enemies, that they joined to sign a pact of non-intervention that would prevent them from sending arms or aid to Spain. Though it is known as "The Spanish Civil War", it was in fact such an international conflict that it seems unfair to call it Spanish or Civil. It has also been labeled "the dress rehearsal for World War II".

Mass civilian executions were relentless, including poet Federico García-Lorca.

After the brutal carnage at Badajoz in August of 1936, where thousands were rounded up and executed by rebel troops in a twenty-four hour period, Chicago Tribune correspondent Jay Allen interviewed Franco, and asked him if he planned to murder more than half of all Spaniards to achieve his goals. Franco replied, "Whatever it takes." The Republican army fought valiantly, aided by soldiers of the international brigades, including the US Abraham Lincoln Brigade, while many of the world's major writers bore witness, including Americans Ernest Hemingway, Martha Gellhorn, Langston Hughes, Dorothy Parker, and Herbert Matthews of the New York Times.

But Franco remained true to his word, and heavily armed by his fellow Fascists, the butchery continued. During the war, hundreds of thousands of Spaniards fled to France, including the family of Jorge Semprún. On April 1, 1939, Franco celebrated his victory and released a statement to all Spaniards declaring "The war is over", a phrase brilliantly subverted by Jorge Semprún in the title of his screenplay.

Despite Franco's triumphant proclamations and presenting himself in uniform covered with medals and an ermine cape, the war was not over at all. The so-called postwar inaugurated a nearly forty year repressive dictatorship where any surviving Republican supporters were

swiftly executed or imprisoned. Franco repaid Hitler by supporting the Third Reich with Spanish Blue Division soldiers and raw materials needed to make armaments.

The generation of Jorge Semprún's father lost their war and their country in 1939. As a teenage exile and refugee, Jorge Semprún would try to avenge this bitter defeat by joining the French resistance. He was an active fighter until he was detained and deported to the Nazi camp at Buchenwald, where he was imprisoned for nearly two years. Once the camp was liberated by US soldiers, he returned to Paris and eventually became a leader in the clandestine anti-Franco movement of the 1950s and 60s. Though many Spanish Republicans clung to the hope that democracy would be restored to Spain after the Allied victory in 1945, they were brutally disappointed when the US did not dispose Franco as a term of Axis defeat, instead aligning itself with a Fascist government and not their former Communist allies, despite a decade, up to that point, of human rights violations and mass civilian slaughter.

The efforts to overthrow the dictatorship were stymied by the repressive machinery of executions and mass incarceration, and by a new middle class that had been created in 1953, when Spain first allowed the United States to build bases on their soil, in exchange for a two billion dollar payment plan. This cushy alliance revitalized the Spanish economy, and allowed Spain to become a top tourist destination. The war was forgotten, and Spain became known for its beaches, cheap sangria and paella, and flamenco. From Semprún's point of view, his country had been destroyed in the war, and then sold itself out. When the good fight seemed to have lost steam, he wrote novels and screenplays based on his experiences and his dreams of seeing a free Spain one day.

*La Guerre est finie* is the first screenplay that Jorge Semprún wrote. The script, which was also published in book form, is dedicated to Florence Malraux, daughter of André Malraux, wife of Alain Resnais, and assistant director on the film. Yves Montand's performance as Semprún's alter-ego Carlos conveys the discreet anxiety of the life of a secret agent ("...Montand remains a rock of commitment, and with Montand's solidity as an actor serving as an anchor of style..." - Andrew Sarris). The movie's title, not to mention its subversive subject - the clandestine anti-Francoist movement based in Paris - caused an uproar within Franco's government. His ministers successfully pressured French leaders (Prime Minister Georges Pompidou and President Charles de Gaulle) to pull the film from competition at the Cannes Film Festival. Resnais was shocked and said that if he had wanted to make a political film he would have made a documentary about the Franco regime. (He had, in fact, made a short film in 1950 entitled *Guernica*). In response to French censorship, Spanish journalists attending Cannes created the "Luis Buñuel Prize", which they awarded to *La Guerr est finie*. The film was also chosen for, and then excluded from, competition at the 1966 Karlovy Vary film festival, though it was also given a special prize thanks to Milos Forman and Antonin Liehm. It won the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best Foreign Language Film and was an Oscar nominee for Best Screenplay, and eventually screened in 2021 at Cannes in the Classics section.

## **Synopsis**

The film opens at 7:15 am, April 18, 1965 with a shot of Carlos and Jude (Dominique Rozan) driving a black car across the Behobie bridge from Spain into France. They've been driving all night. There is a voiceover narration which we can assume to be Carlos' voice, telling his own story. The car approaches French customs officers and they are stopped.

During the wait the viewers are taken through a visual kaleidoscope of Carlos' life: shots of a train, of Carlos walking through an empty Austerlitz train station. The Parisian banlieues, elevators full of people, empty hallways, women's faces looking at him and listening intently. Carlos is a sort of Spanish John Le Carré figure, but instead of working for MI6, he is a clandestine member of the secret Spanish Communist Party and he is working, under assumed identities and great personal danger, to overthrow Francisco Franco. He is a veteran agent with fifteen years experience.

They are detained and Carlos is interrogated by the French officers, but they seem to buy his story that he was on vacation, and his fake passport claiming he is "René Sallanches" appears to work. They are free to continue their journey back to France.

In the second scene, Carlos is at the home/bookstore of Jude and his wife (Anouk Ferjac) in Hendaye. They discuss the alibi he made up at the border. He gave a real name, René Sallanches, and a real phone number. Sallanches' daughter, Nadine (Geneviève Bujold), answered and cleared him. They laugh in relief and argue about why they were stopped at customs. Jude suggests that someone ratted Carlos out.

Carlos heads to the train station at Hendaye, where he is meeting Antoine (Roland Monod), another agent. Carlos asks Antoine worriedly about another associate, Juan (Jean-François Remi), who has apparently not arrived as planned. His mind fills with anxious images of Juan being detained. Carlos tells Antoine it isn't safe for Juan to travel because the Spanish and French police have started to arrest people. Carlos is determined to reach Paris in time to prevent Juan from leaving for Spain. On the train to Paris, he observes the other travelers in his compartment, further establishing the contrast between Carlos, worried about saving a comrade's life, and the French bourgeoisie.

### **Ivry-sur-Seine, Sunday, 5:30 pm**

Carlos with his small suitcase, walks through a vast, impersonal block of apartment buildings. He rings someone's bell. The woman who opens the door is not the Madame Lopez he was looking for. He repeats the address he was given, and she confirms it is correct, but she is Madame Pluvier (Laurence Badie). Back to his interior thoughts and voice over, he recalls seeing Juan at this exact address a year ago. He continues to worry about Juan and decides he must find yet another comrade called Roberto (Paul Crauchet).

### **Aubervilliers, Sunday, 7:00 pm**

Carlos is worried that his comrade Andrés has been arrested, not having shown up for a meeting in Madrid. He goes to Andre's apartment, and his wife Carmen (Françoise Bertin) is surprised to see him, and immediately realizes her husband is in danger. The voiceover comes back in with a long list of disappeared comrades, including Andrés. Carmen bursts into tears.

The two of them go looking for Roberto, who is in charge of organizing all the clandestine trips. Carlos is determined to find Juan and save him.

### **Issy-le-Moulineaux, Sunday, 8:10 pm**

Roberto (Paul Crauchet) arrives in a taxi, and he and Carlos go into a secret Communist party warehouse. Their comrade and old friend Ramón (Jean Bouise) is lining the interior of a car with party literature to be taken across the border. Roberto asks Ramón if he knows where Juan is, and Ramón says he left for Perpignan, en route to Spain, at noon. Carlos wants to call or telegram to alert Juan not to leave France, but Ramón says it is too dangerous. We see an image of Juan being driven towards the border. Carlos explains that comrades are being arrested in Madrid and that it is no longer prudent to make these trips.

### **Nadine Sallanches' apartment, Rue de l'Estrapade, Sunday 9:45 pm**

Carlos and the nineteen-year-old Nadine (Geneviève Bujold) cross paths as he enters her apartment building. They recognize each other from the phone call early in the morning. The apartment is decorated with photos of Fidel Castro and Patrice Lumumba. Nadine says that her family has a weakness for Spaniards, and they are fellow travelers. He thanks her. They flirt while he asks when her father will be back. He has a false passport with her father's name but his photo. She is impressed. They end up in bed. As he gets ready to leave afterwards, he tells her his real name is Domingo (a lie) and she calls him that throughout. He tells her that he knows everything about her and her father, for his false identity.

### **Quai de Béthune, Ile Saint Louis, Monday 12:30 am**

Carlos returns to the apartment he shares with Marianne, annoyed to find that she has colleagues over, who want to know where he has been and ask him about Spain. He nearly blows his cover to her friends, saying he had been at a United Nations meeting in Geneva, when she had told them he was at a UNESCO conference in Rome.

We now discover that he has many aliases, but Diego is his real name.

**Ivry, Monday April 19, 1965 8:30 am**

Pierre Curie Station | Diego (as he'll be known from now on) meets Roberto at the station. The narrator's voice describes the neighborhoods and mood of the Spanish exiled comrades in France. Roberto and Diego leave the station and go to an apartment where their colleagues await them. Their leader is there and greets Diego affectionately. He shows everyone a Spanish newspaper article describing the Spanish police's successful efforts to curtail the left-wing opposition. It details dozens of arrests. Diego's face is onscreen as his voice-over tells how bored he is by the conversation, by how many times they have been in this situation before. The leader thinks that this is their great opportunity, and that Franco is panicking. Diego is skeptical, and critical of the leader's plan to organize a general strike in Spain. The leader never goes to Spain, he is too well known, he doesn't know the country as Diego does. Diego knows it's not going to happen. They continue to argue and finally Diego decides in voice-over that he will not go back to Spain. Diego is alone again with his thoughts, including thoughts about Nadine and Marianne.

He and Roberto go to a workshop to have René Sallanches' passport restored with its original photo, and he asks for a passport for Roberto. Privately, Diego uses the phone to call Marianne and tell her he has decided to stay with her, and not to make any more trips to Spain.

**Monday 3:00 pm, Rue de l'Estrapade**

Diego is walking along the street when he notices a black Renault 404 driving slowly behind him. There are three men in the car. He is immediately on alert. The car is pulling up to Nadine's building, and the man in the back seat gets out and lights a cigarette. The car takes off at full speed. He goes to a phone booth to call Nadine. They make an appointment to see each other at the Centre Bullier at 6:00 pm. Nadine leaves her apartment and goes to the café La Choque. The black car stops in front of the café and one of the men takes a table as close as possible to Nadine. A homeless man bums a cigarette off Diego and tells him that the men in the black car are police. She meets a young man, and the older man from the car stays close to them. Nadine and her friend leave the café, and the police follow them. Diego follows the police.

Later Nadine and Diego appear together at a bookstore on rue Saint Severin, and Nadine denies being followed. The police have stayed on the trail of her male friend. Diego tells her he saw the whole thing. They go to a café, and Diego tries to find out why the police are following her. She says she has no idea, but eventually confesses that her young Spanish boyfriend Miguel (J.M. Flotats) is also working to free Spain from Franco.

**Monday 7:00 pm near Rue de l'Estrapade**

Nadine goes into a garage to get her father's car, a Mercedes. She picks Diego up in the street.

### **Monday, 7:45 pm Boulevard Edgar-Quintet**

They drive along the wall of the Montparnasse cemetery. Nadine eventually gets out and they make a plan to meet later. Diego is alone in the car and takes the wheel.

### **Monday 8:45 pm Quai de Béthune**

Diego goes home to his and Marianne's apartment with a small suitcase that Nadine has given him. The suitcase belongs to Miguel, and she has asked Diego to hide it since the police are following her and Miguel. He goes into his room alone and rummages around until he finds a key that opens the suitcase. It is full of explosive materials and detonators. Marianne tells him that a friend of his came by to leave a message: that Diego has to go to Barcelona the next day, and to meet the man at the same metro station where they met Monday morning. The friend will bring him a new passport.

Images of Juan go through Diego's mind. Diego says he is fed up and doesn't want to travel anymore. Marianne knows him well, and suggests they go out since he doesn't have to leave until the next day. They decide to go to the cinema, and Diego asks Marianne to stop by the Gare de Lyon first so he can leave his suitcase.

### **Monday 9:40 pm Near the Seine**

Diego drives Marianne's convertible along the Seine. A policeman stops them because Diego doesn't have his headlights on. He asks for Diego's papers and interrogates him. They are finally let go.

### **Monday, 9:50 pm, Gare de Lyon**

Marianne puts the suitcase in an empty locker in the station. They get back into the car and head towards a cinema.

### **Monday 10 pm, near the Gare de Lyon**

They stop at a cafe so Diego can make a call. He calls Nadine and makes an appointment to see her at a metro station at 9 am the next day. Back in the car, Marianne accuses Diego of not knowing what he is doing. They argue and go home.

### **Tuesday, April 20, 9 am**

Diego goes to the metro station and looks for the platform that says direction Etoile. Nadine is there. She is mad that he opened the suitcase she asked him to keep for her. He said it was full of explosive materials. They talk about their respective activities working to free Spain. Nadine says that her father loans out his passport, and she carries suitcases. He returns her father's passport to her.



**Tuesday, April 20, 9:15 am**

Diego is in an apartment on Boulevard Edgar-Quintet. A young man comes in. Nadine's young political friends, a Leninist organization called "Action Révolutionnaire" are meeting there. They all talk about strategies to free Spain. The young people want to use terrorism to upset Spain's tourist economy that bolsters the Franco regime. They consider Diego and his party's pacifist strategy useless and obsolete. Diego is angry because he thinks having the suitcase nearly got him arrested. He ends up throwing the key to the suitcase locker on the table and leaves. Nadine runs after him.

**Tuesday, 11:25 am, Ivry**

Diego enters the building where he met with his comrades the day before. He finds out that Ramón has died on Monday night. The comrades are nevertheless hopeful about the upcoming general strike for May 1st, and say things are looking up in Spain. Diego is upset about Ramón's death, but it also makes him realize he must continue his work and go to Barcelona because he is needed. Manolo gives him the address and passcode of the building he must go to in Barcelona. As they discuss all these plans sitting around a table, Diego's thoughts drift to the Montparnasse cemetery and to Ramón's burial.

**Tuesday, 2:00 pm, A street in Ivry**

Diego places his case in the trunk of a convertible car. He and his new driver introduce themselves with false names.

**Tuesday 4:00 pm Rue de l'Estrapade, at Nadine Sallanches**

A police inspector is interviewing Nadine and looking for her father. He tells her that a suspicious man used her father's passport on Sunday, and they are pursuing him. She says that is impossible, and shows him her father's passport. Once he sees it was not stamped on the Sunday in question, he leaves. This is intercut with Diego and his new driver enjoying their journey towards Spain. Nadine becomes hysterical and makes a call to her father to ask him to warn Diego that he is being hunted down. In the meantime, Diego and the driver arrive at a Customs station in Perthuis, and an agent asks for their passports, which he stamps.

**Wednesday, 11:30 am, Orly Airport**

Marianne is at the Air France counter. Manolo (another comrade) asks if she got her ticket. He gives her the same address and code in Barcelona that they gave Diego. She is to show up and ask for Teresa and give her the message that Diego and his driver must not go to Madrid, but return to France, via different routes for safety. As she runs for the plane, Diego's face flashes up in her imagination and on the screen.



*Jorge Semprún, Alain Resnais, and Yves Montand*

**ALAIN RESNAIS** (1922-2014) made films for over sixty years. He was born in Brittany, and as a young boy was given a movie camera which led to his life-long vocation.

He began his career as an actor and film editor, and made his name with the short documentary *Night and Fog* (1956), which won the Jean Vigo Prize, and Francois Truffaut once called "the best film ever made". This film, along with his 1950 short *Guernica* (co-directed with Robert Hessens) proved Resnais a perfect match for screen writer Jorge Semprún, himself a Nazi camp survivor. Both Resnais and Semprún were interested in how to engage with unspeakable horrors of recent and contemporary history using new, oblique, narrative forms. Semprún wrote *La Guerre est finie* for Yves Montand to star, and for Resnais to direct.

Prior to *La Guerre est finie*, Resnais directed three unqualified masterpieces, beginning with his debut feature *Hiroshima, mon amour* (1959) written by Marguerite Duras; *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961), written by Alain Robbe-Grillet; and *Muriel* (1963), written by Jean Cayrol. His collaborations with Jorge Semprún include *La Guerre est finie* (1966) and *Stavisky* (1974).

**YVES MONTAND** (1921-1991) was born Ivo Livi in Monsummano Terme, Italy. His family emigrated to Marseille where he grew up working as a hairdresser and on the docks. He started dancing and singing in music halls, and was discovered by Edith Piaf in Paris in 1944. His first starring role was *Les Portes de la nuit* (1946) directed by Marcel Carné, which featured his now classic version of the song *Autumn Leaves*.

Montand was married to Simone Signoret, with whom he co-starred in many films, and shared a deep political commitment. His brother was a member of the Communist Party, and largely through his friendship with Jorge Semprún, he became deeply interested in human rights issues. In 1975 he was expelled from Spain during a clandestine press conference protesting the use of the death penalty.

Montand and Semprún worked on two more deeply political films together, both also written by Semprún and directed by Costa-Gavras: *Z* (1969), and *The Confession* (1970). He also starred in the Costa-Gavras films *The Sleeping Car Murders* (1965), *State of Siege* (1972) and *Special Section* (1975).

During his extraordinary career, Montand starred in films in both France and abroad by dozens of major filmmakers, including Clouzot, Pontecorvo, Dassin, Cukor, Richardson, Clément, Frankenheimer, Lelouch, Klein, Minnelli, Melville, Godard & Gorin, and Losey. He also narrated work by Chris Marker, who also made a film on Montand, *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Singer* (1974).

In Paris, the Italian Montand, Spanish Semprún, and Greek Costa-Gavras were known as the "three Mediterraneans". They were very close. Semprún wrote a biography of Montand in 1983. In it he said that he could only describe his passion for his friend as akin to falling madly in love with a woman. Both Semprún and Montand's politics grew more conservative as the years passed, and they notably appeared on a Spanish talk show defending the first war on Iraq.

**JORGE SEMPRUN** (1923-2011) was born in Madrid. His maternal grandfather was a five-term Prime Minister of Spain Antonio Maura who survived three assassination attempts. His mother's brother, Miguel Maura, was a leader of the Spanish Republic, the democratically elected Spanish government that was overthrown by Franco's military coup in July, 1936. The coup leaders planned on taking power in two weeks, but their calculation was horrifically off and led Spain into nearly three years of bloodshed. Semprún's early years were shaped by his family's political roots, by the tragic early death of his mother, and by the war in Spain. His father, José María Semprún, organized his family's escape into France in the first weeks of the war. Like all Spanish exiles who went to France, they were running away from one war only to enter into World War II.

Semprún learned French quickly and became a prize-winning philosophy student. With the Nazi occupation and growing youth movements in France, Semprún became politically

engaged and joined the French resistance. He was captured and sent to Buchenwald where he was imprisoned for 18 months.

He was returned to Paris in 1945 with other French soldiers, but since he was not a French citizen he was denied the most basic rights of a war veteran. He joined the French and then the Spanish Communist party in Paris. He worked as a clandestine operative, under the pseudonym Federico Sánchez, making frequent secret trips to Spain to distribute party propaganda, recruit youth leaders from university campuses, and organize strikes. He also reported regularly on Spain to the party chiefs back in Paris.

By the early 1960s he had serious differences with the party leadership, whose approaches he considered outdated and inefficient. They did not appreciate his criticisms and kicked him out. He had already started writing his first novel, *The Long Voyage* (1963) which won the prestigious international Formentor Prize. Thus began a life of writing extremely successful books, including his 1994 *Literature or Life*, and screenplays, starting with *La Guerre est finie*, an Academy Award nominee for Best Original Screenplay. His screenplay for *Z* was nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay. Semprún received countless other accolades including the Jerusalem Prize. When Spain elected its first Socialist government, Prime Minister Felipe González invited Semprún home to Madrid to become the Minister of Culture in 1988, an office he held until 1991.

Jorge Semprún died in 2011. In 2023 France will celebrate its inaugural Jorge Semprún Day on his birthday, December 10.

**Overview, Historical Context, Synopsis and Bios written by Soledad Fox Maura.**

## ***Jorge Semprun on LA GUERRE EST FINIE***

I worked with Alain Resnais for several months and it was such a rigorous, rich experience that it must undoubtedly be very difficult to adapt to someone else after that. When Alain came to ask me to work with him, I had the preconceived notion circulating in certain critical milieux of Resnais as an "image-maker" or an "illustrator." Yet as my experience has proved this is a radically false idea.

I don't know how he worked with Marguerite Duras, Robbe-Grillet, and Jean Cayrol. I think that each of his films poses particular problems and that each film has its particular working method. While it is true that Resnais does not write a single word or place a single comma in the text, it must be emphasized that not a single comma has been placed in the script without prior discussion. One writes WITH him from the first day. Then the working rhythm gradually takes shape, but basically every three days we would review everything that had been written and discuss everything that was going to be written. We would often go back over a text that seemed entirely satisfactory and throw it in the wastepaper basket because Resnais had stumbled over a term or a kind of demagoguery in an expression or an emotion and once again we rediscussed the scene.

(...) I was very young at the time of the civil war, but the entire Spanish people tragically lived through this period. At the start, Alain and I had said we wouldn't deal with Spain. But the initial idea, the reason for the whole undertaking, which Alain had proposed to me, was to make a POLITICAL film. Based on that, we discussed and put aside, about two years ago, a certain number of scenarios to ultimately arrive in Spain. But, from the outset, the idea was to make a political film on the organization, struggle, and problems of activists. Resnais had thought of the actions of a "Committee against war" or a "Committee for prisoners in Greece," featuring a journey by someone trying to stir people up, to agitate around this issue; there was a whole series of ideas around this political option. So really we foregrounded a universal theme from the very beginning, rather than a place and a historical moment. Anyhow, it had to be a current contemporary story, it was out of the question to do a reenactment or something retrospective... We came back to Spain for various reasons, first probably because I'm Spanish and that since I have a better knowledge of some of the issues there it was easier for me. But also, Alain himself considered that Spain was not only a current, living issue, but that it carried the weight of thirty years of mixed French and Spanish history, as well as this new knowledge through the millions of tourists who have an impact of a political nature. So, Resnais himself came to choose Spain in a normal, spontaneous fashion.

(...) The initial starting point we worked on from this idea was a man like Diego returning to France, where he had lived for a long time, after twelve years in prison. From Spain, he returns to France, which he had left on the trip during which he was arrested, and he rediscovers the world twelve years later. But he was a passive hero. And one day Alain said: "No, that's over, we need a goal, this man has no undertaking other than breathing, living, or finding a woman and friends." Ultimately, we used the same framework of a journey to

construct that storyline, which also developed a great deal. But we needed an action, and it was more interesting to show politics through an undertaking than through a passion, a passive page of literature. We needed to show action itself and not its potential dramatic consequences.

***From 'Positif', no. 66, October 1966***  
***Translated by Nicholas Elliott***



## **THE AUTHOR SPEAKS by Jorge Semprún**

A time finally comes when a story, that is to say, a long series of words, signs and symbols that have been put down on paper, finally becomes a film. No doubt, at this precise moment, this transition from the written word to the verbal signs and symbols of the images, the author of the story must efface himself, let himself be forgotten. The cinematographic images, their rhythm and luminous obscurity, the actors playing out their lies that have more reality than truth itself, are not his concern or doing.

You write a story. But, it is the film that they are making and, evidently, a film is an altogether different undertaking. An altogether different adventure. The work and adventure of Alain Resnais, his technicians and the actors he has chosen.

For the author, to speak about *La Guerre est finie* at the very moment when it has become a film is conceivable only as a return to himself, to reexamine the experiences of having worked with Alain Resnais for several months. A most trying experience, in every sense of the term, because all possibility of self-complacency, all sentimental or verbal flattery of the audience were excluded; because one was pushed to two opposite poles of an authentic intellectual venture: exalting discipline on the one hand and imaginative frenzy on the other.

One does not write a story that Alain Resnais then takes to transpose into images or direct. One writes for him and with him. And, at times, against him; against and despite oneself. Against our own personal little obsessions - which interest no one, perhaps not even ourselves.

It is well known that Resnais writes not a line, not a word of a scenario that he is going to film. At the most, after rehearsing with his actors, the evening before shooting he might propose certain verbal modifications that for the requirements of acting the depiction of the characters will have revealed. But, there is not a line, not a word of the scenario that does not become stamped, in some way, with the results of his work, with his exacting demands, with his overall vision of the cinematographic project. He arrives one day with a scene that seems ready, everything in place, but in which he has butted against - oh, it isn't serious, he says - a single adjective, for example. At the end of the hour, however, one thing leads to another, and the scene comes apart under rigorous analysis. The incongruous, or shocking adjective - or, to the contrary, perhaps it was too dull - has brought down with it in its fall the whole structure of the scene. Everything must be started over again, from zero. One does not replace an adjective with another, just like that, stupidly, when writing for Alain Resnais. An adjective is not simply stricken: the entire scene is rewritten. As many times as necessary.

Despite his thoroughly considered refusal to write, this shows the share he actually has in the writing of the scenario. As soon as his work begins, as soon as he comes to find you, and because he has decided that you would write for him, he keeps the initiative, at every instant.

Thus, through all the detours of a procedure which seems hesitant, groping, through the successive versions of the scenario - which pile up like the various strata of geological deposit - Alain Resnais' original intentions become explicit and clear, and one finds himself writing, more or less well, that which he had decided you would write.

If there is a question of Spain, *La Guerre est finie*, it is because Resnais felt the need for this historical landscape: myths that have nourished for thirty years, truth that he reveals, problems that he poses, in the accepted objective limits of a series of very precisely dated events.

If there is a question of politics in *La Guerre est finie*, in the sense that "politics is the tragedy of our times", it is also because of the deliberate choice, because of his determination to approach, once again and on a particular dramatic level, a question which seems to haunt him: what hold have we on the word and what are the means.

But, as I have already said, one does not write a story so that Alain Resnais will direct it. From the first day, from the first hesitating line, one writes it with him and for him. And his scrupulous and even fastidious respect for the written text, for what is pompously called "the intentions of the author", is an exacting form of faithfulness to one's self and, right from the start, to a venture that is common to both, shared by both.

***From 'Arts'***



**"A landmark."**

– Dave Kehr, *Chicago Reader*

**"If in some ways the most satisfying movie Resnais has made, credit is due largely to the lucidity and integrity of Yves Montand's Diego, a revolutionary engulfed by fears, fantasies and futilities... Through his mind passes what we know and feel about the heritage of the Old Left, that last, desperate camaraderie commemorated in kitchens and cemeteries as old comrades grapple with the old rhetoric they're doomed never to forget and the new reality they're doomed never to understand."**

– Andrew Sarris

**"A triumph and a thriller. Erotic scenes of such outright beauty, such suburb subtlety. An outstanding film from our time."**

– Judith Crist, *World Journal Tribune*

**"How not to be moved to tears by *La Guerre est finie*? There is a miracle there I do not try to understand."**

– Michel Caen, *Cahiers du Cinéma*

**"A masterpiece. One of the all-time greats."**

– Archer Winston, *New York Post*

**"So far above the other thriller films that comparison would be foolish."**

– Bosley Crowther, *The New York Times*

**"Resnais' previous films were explorations of the subconscious. With *La Guerre est finie*, he unexpectedly gives us not only psychology but an exciting thriller, done with great artistry."**

– Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*

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*cabiers du*  
**CINEMA**  
*in english*

*Bresson - Godard - Delabaye*  
*Joseph L. Mankiewicz*  
*Milos Forman*  
*'La Guerre Est Finie'*



LA GUERRE EST FINIE received the International Critics Award, Cannes Film Festival 1966; the French Academy Award—"Best Picture Of The Year"; the French Academy Award—"Yves Montand, Best Actor of the Year"; and the Louis Delluc Prix, France's most coveted critical award.

The New York film critics at the Film Festival called LA GUERRE EST FINIE "A TRIUMPH. AN OUTSTANDING FILM OF OUR TIME. CERTAINLY THE OUTSTANDING OFFERING AT THE FESTIVAL."—Judith Crist, World Journal Tribune, "BEAUTIFULLY MADE AND ACTED... strikingly realistic and emotionally taut."—Bosley Crowther, N.Y. Times, "A WORK OF ART... a great statement for our times."—Archer Winsten, N.Y. Post.

# LA GUERRE



# EST FINIE

(THE WAR IS OVER)

Directed by ALAIN RESNAIS

Starring

YVES MONTAND · INGRID THULIN · GENEVIEVE BUJOLD

and Introducing

Produced by SOFRACIMA / PARIS—EUROPA FILM, STOCKHOLM / A BRANDON FILMS RELEASE

American Premiere — BEEKMAN THEATRE — Now Playing

Theatrical Distribution 1967/Non Theatrical Distribution 1968

**BRANDON FILMS,** Inc., Dept. CDC, 221 West 57 Street, New York 10019

## The Times Change

She is called Nadine Sallanches but her actual name is Geneviève Bujold. She is Canadian. Twenty years old, five feet, five inches, ninety-nine pounds. Stubborn, ironic, falsely adult, egoist by her own admission, realistic, captivating, Geneviève-Nadine exists. She is a distant cousin of that Monique Zimmer signed Jean-Luc Godard, her obverse (or lucky side, if one prefers), she is like fifteen students one knows on the university lecture-room benches, irritating sometimes, often, but alive and not without charm. One evening, on the stairs, she meets Diego, the "regular" who makes use of her father's passport to cross the Spanish frontier. That very morning, she has made it possible for him to escape the police. Diego is the messenger of adventure. Worn out from his journey, victim of coincidences, he is unattached.

Nadine offers herself to him. Naked, the light slaps on her flanks, making us rediscover cinema in black and white; her fingers, anxiously clenched, unfold and slowly; her thighs open; and the screen sends back to us, very simply, the image of physical love.

If I have kept myself speaking only of Geneviève Bujold, that was not by chance. I have my reasons: a) she is very beautiful; b) others have taken it upon themselves to talk about the rest; c) *La Guerre est finie* is a political film, and what better way is there to approach politics? d) in the end, we realize it, there is something changed in Alain Resnais—or at least in the vision that henceforth we will have of his work—and that is our subject.

When Diego makes love with Nadine, the sequence in fact does not fail to astonish us. Not so much because of the frankness of the images (although the final shot is unusually honest), but rather because the surface realism shown here is without precedent in the body of work that we had believed passed through the finest sieve of analysis.

The surprise is the same with respect to the relationship between Diego and Marianne — to limit ourselves to the problems of the couple, which, contrary to generally accepted opinion, are not the least in the world foreign to those of politics. For once, everything indicates to us, three days on end, the perceptible weight of reality. The fact is sufficiently unusual to be mentioned. Of course Resnais does not fall into the trap of wanting to show in its entirety the protagonists' use of time, but no break in continuity, no ellipsis, asserts itself conspicuously. The actual length

of the film gives its own measure to the movement and to the rhythm. *La Guerre est finie* exists wholly between two privileged instants which are themselves neither beginning nor end. All the rest is arbitrary, mind's view, cinema, one should say, as one says literature.

Now, as Fellini persists in showing from film to film, realism does not confuse itself with naturalism. Nothing more normal, then, if the mental representations of the hero, Yves Montand, burst into the midst of very concrete events, and that with an infinitesimal displacement that allows one ultimately to distinguish the lived from the imaginary. As Resnais himself made explicit to us: "Imagination is not always fantastic. It is indeed very exceptionally of fantastic inspiration; most often its representations are rigorously banal, routine.

In this instance, it is no longer the time of Proustian remembrances, it is no longer the immense edifice of memory that weighs upon man, trammeling his decisions, but, in a way, the contrary, the necessary stream of consciousness that precedes the passage to actions. The flashback yields in favor of the flash-forward, the idea precedes the realization, making it possible, in assuring it, in a way, the indispensable kindling. Diego is a dreamer then. So be it, but his dream is necessary, and justifies what one could have taken for a figure of style without any relation to the body of the film.

On the other hand, then, the real world, given, exterior: politics the couple (or the couples); on the other, the idea of the world: the future, possibility, the end to attain. So it is not by chance that Diego's mental representations, numerous at the start of the film, little by little yield place to reality, but quite simply because action mixes itself indistinguishably into the desire for action. Which means, in other words, that the war continues or begins again, and that that alone matters, even if its outcome is uncertain. So *La Guerre est finie* is the placing of a necessary bet on the future, and in that sense reiterates a theme dear to John Huston and to the new nations. Contrary to *Muriel*, which dispelled all the protagonists little by little with a centrifugal movement, *La Guerre est finie* delineates a center of attraction about which the characters describe several revolutions before being carried along in a vast movement of the whole.

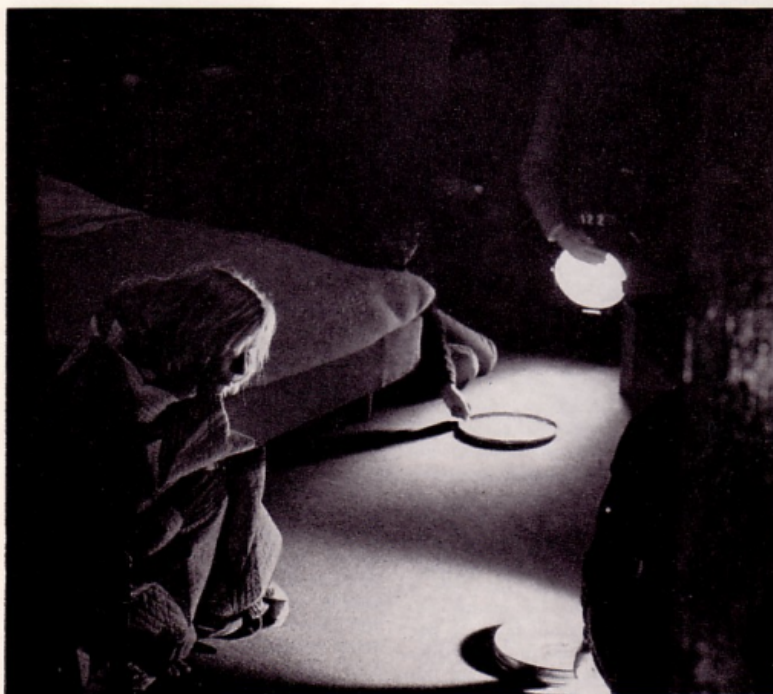
It is no longer the straight line of *Muriel*, broken little by little, bent in



(Antoine), Roger Pelletier (The sport-loving inspector), Jean-François Remy (Juan), Antoine Bourseiller, R. J. Chauffard, Antoine Vietz, Marie Mergé. Director of production: Alain Queffelec. Producer: Sofracima (Paris), Europe Film (Stockholm), 1966. Distributor: Cocinor. Length: 2 hrs.



Alain Resnais: *La Guerre est finie*, Yves Montand among the terrorists.



In production: *La Guerre est finie*, Ingrid Thulin.

a multitude of curves, but on the contrary the indecisive pendular movement (here the itinerary France — Spain — France finds a new meaning) that transforms itself imperceptibly into a rectilinear trajectory.

However, the film does not end on a victory beyond appeal. All the questions that have formulated themselves in three days remain, become yet more acute. Will Diego warn Juan? Will the general strike be a success? Will Marianne rejoin Diego?

Resnais and Semprun do not answer these questions, and that is only through honesty; for I find most suspect, the analyses that want to recognize there a conclusion without clouds. Certainly Marianne enters the organization in her turn (indeed someone was needed to warn Diego); certainly Diego is, for a time, reconciled with his own contradictions. What will happen after that, is not for the film to infer. The Spanish regular fixes his eyes on Marianne and twice repeats with agonized obstinacy "*Ca va marcher*," "It will work." What counts in fact is that two trajectories catch up with each other at last, that the same movement carries along Diego and Marianne and mixes



Alain Resnais: *La Guerre est finie*, Yves Montand and Ingrid Thulin.

them with each other in the most beautiful dissolve that there is. Open ending, point of departure therefore, active and concrete optimism. There is something to displease conservatives of both parties, not counting those who admit quite well the word "revolution" but absolutely not that of "communist."

Very curiously, moreover, *La Guerre est finie* has annoyed an entire section of Resnaisians of the first hour, those who no doubt admired him for wrong reasons. The lovers of Hiroshima exchanged in bed not very probable litanies; those of Marienbad lost their way in a Borgesian labyrinth; while a monstrous reality led the characters of *Muriel* to nothingness. Each time, reality was sublimated or warped. That was necessary, a kind of justification of the *auteur* facing his environment. It was a way, too (intelligent and elegant), of taking his distance, of showing — by this esthetic option alone — a rare lucidity.

Since everyone today knows Resnais' passion for comic strips, as well to make it explicit immediately: *Marienbad* was Falk plus Raymond, and *Muriel*, Chester Gould. Today the times change; it is no longer enough to be

lucid and to show it. So *La Guerre est finie* is an open work, but on the only possible road — action, persistence, and no doubt *allégresse*, joyous liveliness, in the sense in which Johann Sebastian Bach would understand it.

European cinema, and especially French cinema, apparently lacks the hero. Even more than the hero, it is the sense of tragedy that we lack.

Politics is the tragedy of our period. It is that too of *La Guerre est finie*. The heroes are no longer called Mandrake, Dick Tracy or Flash Gordon; Diego just wears the raincoat of Red Barry. The heroes have become tired men, aged, sometimes irritable. Their skulls are balding; they talk for hours around a checkered oilcloth; they journey from HLM to HLM; they catch a little sleep in a DS between Madrid and Irun. They have naive passwords; the sun that rises on Benidorm is their magic key; they are the working mechanisms of an organization; but they exist and no doubt the word happiness has a meaning for them.

Their world is that of underground action; they prefer twilight to terrorist blazes. They die of a heart attack between dog and wolf at the hour when

one passes a frontier and when the lights are lighted in Paris whose apartment buildings all look alike. Classic film though it is, *La Guerre est finie* disconcerts at first viewing, shows only rectilinear surfaces without faults, fit to discourage analysis.

How not to be moved to tears by *La Guerre est finie*? There is a miracle there that I do not try to understand. For the first time with so much precision and exactness, cinema, in one and the same movement, establishes the contact between the human being and the surrounding reality. Without this persistence in wanting oneself ceaselessly at the stature of man (a weakness according to some people), would it be so poignant, that extraordinary dissolve in which the face of Ingrid Thulin rises little by little, rejoins that of Montand, giving their entire meaning to the words *enchainé* and *ensemble* — which, too, are themselves passwords, evoking irresistibly the very rhythm of Joyce:—"and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes."

—Michel CAEN

## Ode to the Old Left

Alain Resnais' *La Guerre est finie* embellished the 1966 New York Film Festival with its extraordinary excellence. It's a long way from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade to Lincoln Center, but memory and nostalgia have a way of preserving lost causes as the conscience of history. Thus simply for its subject, *La Guerre est finie* should regain for Resnais most of the admirers he lost somewhere on the tracks between Hiroshima and Marienbad. The almost irresistible temptation to insult

director's feelings may be, Montand remains a rock of commitment, and with Montand's solidity as an actor serving as an anchor of style, a sea of images can be unified into a mental characterization. Whereas the awesome majesty of the late Nikolai Cherkasov obliterated montage in the late Sergei Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*, the humanity of Montand domesticates montage in *La Guerre est finie*. We are no longer concerned with the pretentious counterpoint of Love and the Bomb, Past and



*La Guerre est finie*, Jean Bouise and Yves Montand.

the Idiot Left must be resisted at all costs. Who is to say that people should not admire the right films for the wrong reasons? It is for the critic to register the right reasons. The creator prefers profitable misunderstandings and confusions so that he can find the funds to continue his career.

If *La Guerre est finie* is in some ways the most satisfying movie Resnais has made, credit is due largely to the lucidity and integrity of Yves Montand's characterization of Diego, a revolutionary engulfed by fears, fantasies and futilities. However fragmented the

Present, Illusion and Reality, Society and the Individual, etc. We are obsessed instead with the doubts of Diego, the fears of Diego, the hopes of Diego, the instincts of Diego, even the fantasies of Diego. Through his mind passes what we are to know and feel about the heritage of the Old Left, that last, desperate camaraderie commemorated in kitchens and cemeteries as old comrades grapple with the old rhetoric they are doomed never to forget and the new reality they are doomed never to understand.

For Resnais, it is enough to celebrate

remembrance and mourn forgetfulness as fragments of personality and politics disintegrate in the void of time. Civilization is the process of trying to remember, and Resnais once did a documentary on the Paris Library as the supreme ornament of civilization. Cinema, however, is more than remembering and forgetting. It is also acting, doing, resolving, indeed being. Cinema, like life, is a process of creating memories for the future. Resnais has always drawn on the past without paying for the future. His cinema has been hauntingly beautiful if dramatically improvident in its ghostliness. His characters have been paralyzed by the sheer pastness of their sensibilities. Montand's Diego is no exception, but a marvelous thing has happened. Montand's dignity and bearing have broken through the formal shell of Resnais' art to dramatize the doubts and hesitations of the director. Diego has become a hero of prudence and inaction. He has shown what it is to be a man without the obvious flourishes of virility so fashionable today. (Even the stately explicitness of the love-making is a measure of the hero's stature.) To be a man, it is above all necessary to be patient as one's life dribbles away on the back streets, blind alleys and dead ends of political impotence. The at times agonizing slowness of *La Guerre est finie* achieves the pathos of patience by expressing a devotion to detail common to both Diego and Resnais. It has always seemed that Resnais was more suited to documentary than fiction because of a preoccupation with facts rather than truths. The parts in Resnais always seem superior to the whole and if *La Guerre est finie* is an exception, it is because the integral behaviorism of a performer has buttressed the analytical style of a director. It is as if Resnais were dropping things all over the screen, and Montand was walking around picking them up. That *La Guerre est finie* finally makes us weep is a tribute to Montand's tenacity.

As for what the film actually "says," Jorge Semprun's script is explicit enough for the least sophisticated audiences. The meaning is in the title. The War Is Over, and Resnais, unlike Zinnemann in the grotesquely unfeeling *Behold a Pale Horse*, makes no attempt to reconstruct the agonies of antiquity with old newsreels. The ultimate tragedy of The Spanish Civil War is that all its participants are either dead or 30 years older. Spain still exists as a geographical entity, but it has been repopulated with an indifferent generation. Tourists swarm through Madrid and Barcelona while old Bolsheviks haul pamphlets into Seville. The New Left sneers at the Old Left. But it doesn't matter as long as one man can keep the faith in the midst of uncertainty.

—Andrew SARRIS



## ***Credits***

*LA GUERRE EST FINIE* (1966)

Director - Alain Resnais

Scenario and Dialogues - Jorge Semprún

Music - Giovanni Fusco

Assistant directors - Jean Leon and Florence Malraux

Director of Photography - Sacha Vierny

Editor - Eric Pluet

Assistant Editor - Hadassa Misrahi



Cast (in order of appearance):

Yves Montand - Diego  
Dominique Rozan - Jude  
Jean-François Remi - Juan  
Marie Mergey - Mme Lopez  
Jacques Wallet - A C.R.S Militia Policeman  
Michel Piccoli - An Inspector  
Anouk Ferjac - Mme Jude  
Roland Monod - Antoine  
Pierre Decazes - A Railroad Employee  
Paul Crauchet - Roberto  
Ingrid Thulin - Marianne  
Claire Duhamel - A traveler  
Antoine Bourseiller - A traveler  
Laurence Badie - Bernadette Pluvier  
Françoise Bertin - Carmen  
Yvette Etievant - Yvette  
Jean Bouise - Ramon  
Geneviève Bujold - Nadine Sallanches  
Annie Fargue - Agnes  
Gérard Sety - Bill  
Catherine de Seynes - Jeanine  
Jacques Rispal - Manolo  
Jean Dasté - Section Chief  
Pierre Leproux - The Forger  
Roger Pelletier - An Inspector  
R.J. Chauffard - A Tramp  
J.M Flotats - Miguel  
Jean Bolo - A Policeman  
Pierre Barbaud - A Customer  
Gérard Lartigau - A Chief of the A.R. Group  
Jean Larroquette - A Member of the A.R. Group  
Martine Vatel - A Student  
Paillette - An Old Lady  
Jacques Robnard - Pierrot  
Marcel Cuvelier - Inspector Chardin  
Bernard Fresson - Sarlat  
Antoine Vitez - Air France Employee

**Press Kit edited by Jacob Perlin, The Film Desk**

**Layout by Andrea Torres, Film Forum**

**Text by Soledad Fox Maura**

Soledad Fox Maura is an author and scholar. Before becoming a full-time academic, she worked at the French Film Office in New York City. She has written several books that have come out in English, Spanish, and French, and contributes to *Lit Hub*, *El País*, and academic journals. Her biography of Jorge Semprún was a *Wall Street Journal* "top five Literary Lives" selection. In 2021 her first novel, *Madrid Again*, was published by Arcade. She is a Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature at Williams College. More info at:

[www.soledadfoxmaura.com](http://www.soledadfoxmaura.com)

### ***About The Film Desk***

The Film Desk was founded by Jacob Perlin in 2008. The company's mission is to introduce, or re-introduce, international classics to audiences, primarily in new 35mm prints. The Film Desk's first theatrical release was the North American premiere of Philippe Garrel's *I Can No Longer Hear the Guitar*. This was followed by the 2008 theatrical re-release of Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux*, which had been long unavailable theatrically. Other films which received their official US theatrical premieres by The Film Desk include Michelangelo Antonioni's *Le Amiche* and Alain Cavalier's *Le Combat dans L'île*. The Film Desk has also released Resnais' *Je t'aime, je t'aime*, Pialat's *We Will Not Grow Old Together*, Sontag's *Promised Lands* and Denis' *Trouble Every Day*.

Film Desk Books has published *Francois Truffaut: From the New Yorker, 1960-1976* by Lillian Ross, the interview collections *Pasolini in New York* and *Duras/Godard Dialogues, The World of Jia Zhangke* by Jean-Michel Frodon, a new edition of *Film as a Subversive Art* by Amos Vogel, the forthcoming new translation of *Beauty and the Beast Diary* by Jean Cocteau and new edition of *Facing Blackness* by Ashley Clark.

Jacob Perlin was Associate Curator at BAMcinématek through 2010, Programmer-at-Large for Film at Lincoln Center, and the founding Artistic Director and Director of Programming of Metrograph, and is currently the Creative Director of Cinema Conservancy.

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