Vimeo link for this week's film and **ALL** of Bruce Jackson's and Diane Christian's film introductions and post-film discussions in the virtual BFS

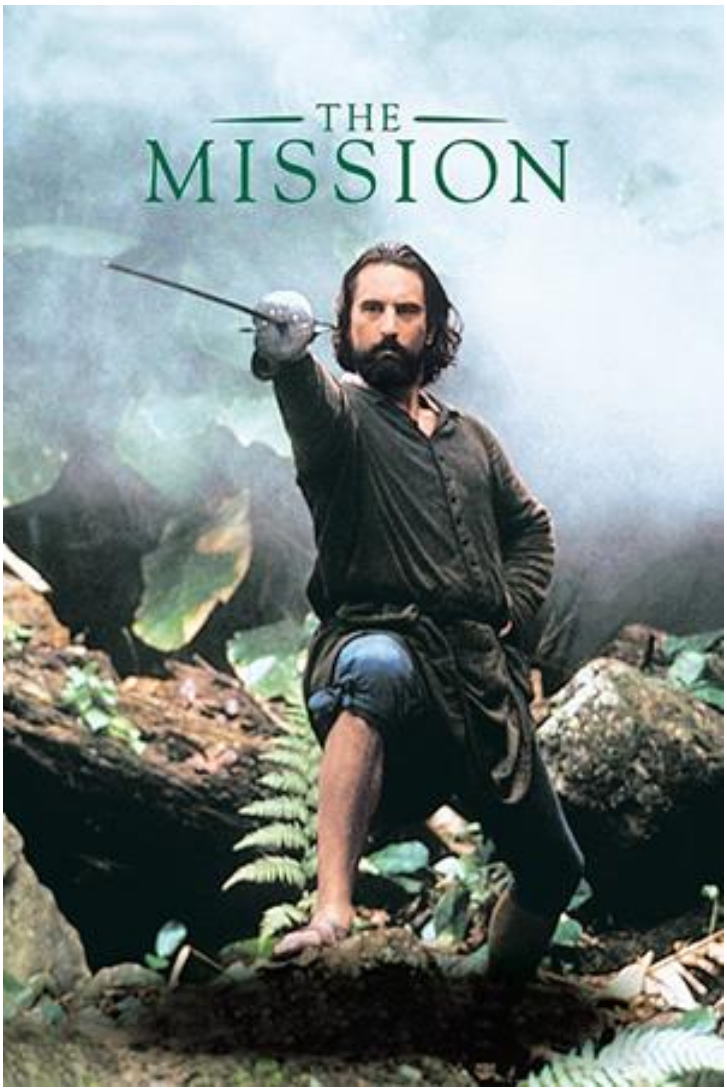
Zoom link for all FALL 2021 BFS Tuesday 7:00 PM post-screening discussions

The film is available for streaming on Amazon Prime. UB email account holders can access it free via the UB Library's Swank Digital Campus portal.

Directed by Roland Joffé
Original story & screenplay by Robert Bolt
Produced by Fernando Ghia & David Puttnam
Music by Ennio Morricone
Cinematography by Chris Menges
Film Editing by Jim Clark
Costume Design by Enrico Sabbatini
Armorer…Simon Atherton
Supervising rock climber…Joe Brown

Winner of the Palme d'Or, as well as the Technical Grand Prize, at the 1986 Cannes Film Festival. Winner of the 1987 Oscar for Best Cinematography for Chris Menges.

CAST
Robert De Niro…Rodrigo Mendoza
Jeremy Irons...Father Gabriel
Ray McAnally…Cardinal Altamirano
Aidan Quinn…Felipe Mendoza
Cherie Lunghi…Carlotta
Ronald Pickup…Hontar
Chuck Low…Cabeza
Liam Neeson…Fielding
Bercelio Moya…Indian Boy
Sigifredo Ismare…Witch Doctor
Asuncion Ontiveros…Indian Chief



Alejandrino Moya…Chief's Lieutenant
Daniel Berrigan…Sebastian
Rolf Gray…Young Jesuit
Álvaro Guerrero…Jesuit
Tony Lawn…Father Provincial
Joe Daly…Nobleman
Carlos Duplat…Portuguese Commander
Rafael Camerano…Spanish Commander
Monirak Sisowath…Ibaye
Silvestre Chiripua…Indian
Luis Carlos Gonzalez…Boy Singer
Maria Teresa Ripoll…Carlotta's Maid

ROLAND JOFFÉ (b. November 17, 1945 in London, England) won both the Palme d'Or and Technical Grand Prize for *The Mission* (1986) at the 1986 Cannes Film Festival. He was also nominated for two Oscars for Best Director in 1987 for *The Mission* (1986) and in 1985 for *The Killing Fields* (1984). He has directed several projects in pre-production, including *L'Inverno, The Great Hunger*,

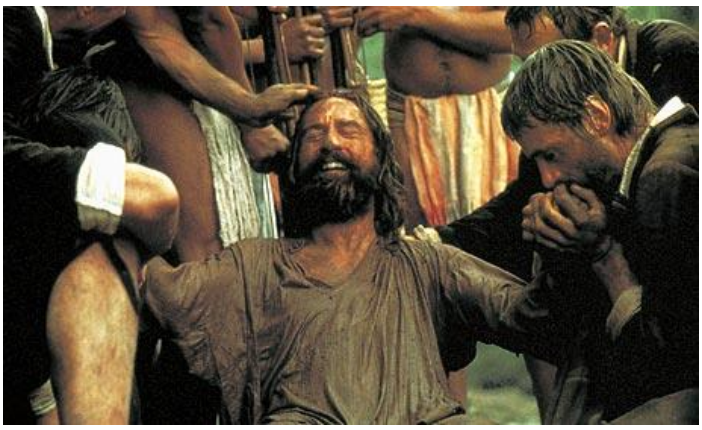
and *The Maestro*. He has directed 30 films and TV shows including, *A Lover Scorned* (2019, TV Movie), *The Forgiven* (2017), *Sun Records* (2017, TV Series), *The Lovers* (2015), *There Be Dragons* (2011), *You and I* (2011), *Captivity* (2007), *Undressed* (2002, TV Series, 1 episode), *Vatel* (2000), *Goodbye Lover* (1998), *The Scarlet Letter* (1995), *City of Joy* (1992), *Fat Man and Little Boy* (1989), *The Mission* (1986), *The Killing Fields* (1984), *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1980, TV Movie), *Headmaster* (TV Series) (1977, 3 episodes), *Sam* (TV Series) (1974-1975, 4 episodes), and *Coronation Street* (1973-1974, TV Series, 4 episodes).

ROBERT BOLT (b. August 15, 1924 in Sale, Cheshire, England, UK—d. February 20, 1995 (age 70) in Petersfield, Hampshire, England, UK) was an English playwright and a two-time Oscar-winning screenwriter, known for writing the screenplays for *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) and *A Man for All Seasons* (1966), the first of which earned him an Oscar for Best Writing and the latter two of which won him Oscars in the same category. He wrote for 24 films, including: *A Man for All Seasons* (1957 TV Movie), *The Red Tent* (1969), *Ryan's Daughter* (1970), *Lady Caroline Lamb* (1972), *The Bounty* (1984), *The Mission* (1986), and *Without Warning: The James Brady Story* (1991 TV Movie).

ENNIO MORRICONE (b. November 10, 1928, Rome, Lazio, Italy—d. July 6, 2020, Rome, Lazio, Italy), finally, in 2016, won an Oscar for Best Achievement in Music Written for Motion Pictures, Original Score for his work on Quentin Tarantino's *The Hateful Eight* (2015). He had been nominated four times for an Oscar for Best Music, Original Score for *Malèna* (2000) in 2001, *Bugsy* (1991) in 1992, *The Untouchables* (1987) in 1998, *The Mission* (1986) in 1987, and *Days of Heaven* (1978) in 1979. At the 2007 Oscars he won an Honorary Award for his magnificent and multifaceted contributions to the art of film music. He won a Grammy Award in 1988 for Best Album of Original Instrumental Background Score Written for a Motion Picture or Television for *The Untouchables* (1987). At the 1995 Venice Film Festival, Morricone won a Career Golden Lion in celebration of cinema's 100th anniversary. He has composed for over 527 films and TV series, some of which are *Love Story* (2011), *The Unknown Woman* (2006), *Fateless* (2005), *Ripley's Game* (2002), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1998), *The Legend of 1900* (1998), *Bulworth* (1998), *Lolita* (1997), *The Nymph* (1997), *The Stendhal Syndrome* (1997), *Disclosure* (1994), *Love Affair* (1994), *The Night and the Moment* (1994), *In the Line of Fire* (1993), *Bugsy* (1991), *Husbands and Lovers* (1991), *Hamlet* (1990), *Everybody's Fine* (1990), *Crossing the Line* (1990), *The Bachelor* (1990), *Fat Man and Little Boy* (1989), *Time to Kill* (1989), *The Casualties of War* (1989), *Cinema Paradiso* (1998), *Frantic* (1998), *Rampage* (1987), *The Untouchables* (1987), *Control* (1987), *The Mission* (1986), *Red Sonja* (1985), *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), *Sahara* (1983), *Order of Death* (1983), *La Cage aux Folles* (1978), *Days of Heaven* (1978), *Holocaust 2000* (1977), *The Exorcist II* (1977), *The Inheritance* (1976), *1900* (1976), *The Sunday Woman* (1975), *Eye of the Cat* (1975), *A Genius, Two Friends, and an Idiot* (1975), *The Man from Chicago* (1975), *The End of the Game* (1975), *The Night Caller* (1975), *The Serpent* (1973), *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966) and *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964). He has also done extensive soundtrack work for Quentin Tarantino's films including *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) and *Django Unchained* (2012).

CHRIS MENGES (b. on September 15, 1940 in Kington, Herefordshire, England) won two Oscars for Best Cinematography, one in 1987 for *The Mission* (1986) and one in 1985 for *The Killing Fields* (1984). He was also nominated in 2009 for Best Achievement in Cinematography *The Reader* (2008), which he shared with Roger Deakins. He has been a cinematographer on 67 films and TV series including, *Voice of Land* (Documentary, 2021), *Waiting for the Barbarians* 2019), *Redemption* (2013), *The Reader* (2008), *North Country* (2005), *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (2005), *The Good Thief* (2002), *The Boxer* (1997), *Michael Collins* (1996), *The Mission* (1986), *Marie* (1985), *Which Side Are You On?* (1985, Documentary), *The Killing Fields* (1984),

R.H.I.N.O.; Really Here in Name Only (1983, TV Movie), *Walter and June* (1983, TV Movie), *Local Hero* (1983, lighting cameraman), *Angel* (1982), *East 103rd Street* (1981, Documentary), *The Gamekeeper* (1980), *Gumshoe* (1971, photographed by), *Black Beauty* (1971), *Abel Gance: The Charm of Dynamite* (1968, Documentary), *A Boy Called Donovan* (1966, TV Movie documentary) and *The War Game* (1963, Short).



ROBERT DE NIRO (August 17, 1943 in New York City, New York) is an American actor (116 credits), producer (35 credits), and director. He has won Oscars for Best Actor in a Leading Role twice for *The Godfather: Part II* (1974) and *Raging Bull* (1980). De Niro's first major film roles were in the sports drama *Bang the Drum Slowly* (1973) and Scorsese's crime film *Mean Streets* (1973). He earned Academy Award nominations for the psychological thrillers *Taxi Driver* (1976) and *Cape Fear* (1991), both directed by Scorsese. De Niro received additional nominations for Michael Cimino's Vietnam war drama *The Deer Hunter* (1978), Penny Marshall's drama *Awakenings* (1990), and David O. Russell's romantic comedy-drama *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012). These are some of his other films: *Three Rooms in Manhatt*an (1965), *Young Wolves* (1968), *Greetings* (1968), *The Wedding Party* (1969), *Bloody Mama* (1970), *Hi, Mom!* (1970), *Jennifer on My Mind* (1971), *Born to Win* (1971), *The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight* (1971), *Bang the Drum Slowly* (1973), *1900* (1976), *The Last Tycoon* (1976), *New York, New York* (1977), *True Confessions* (1981), *The King of Comedy* (1982), *Once Upon a Time in America* (1984), *Brazil* (1985), *The Mission* (1986), *Angel Heart* (1987), *The Untouchables* (1987), *Midnight Run* (1988), *Jacknife* (1989), *We're No Angels* (1989), *Stanley & Iris* (1990), *Goodfellas* (1990), *Backdraft* (1991), *Night and the City* (1992), *Mad Dog and Glory* (1993), *This Boy's Life* (1993), *A Bronx Tale** (1993), *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994), *One Hundred and One Nights* (1995), *Casino* (1995), *Heat* (1995), *The Fan* (1996), *Sleepers* (1996), *Marvin's Room* (1996), *Cop Land* (1997), *Jackie Brown* (1997), *Wag the Dog* (1997), *Ronin* (1998), *Analyze This* (1999), *Men of Honor* (2000), *Meet the Parents* (2000), *The Score* (2001), *Showtime* (2002), *Analyze That* (2002), *Godsend* (2004), *Shark Tale* (2004), *Meet the Fockers* (2004), *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (2004), *The Good Shepherd** (2006), *Little Fockers* (2010), *Killer Elite* (2011), *Last Vegas* (2013), *American Hustle* (2013), *The Comedian* (2016), and the upcoming Martin Scorsese film *Killers of the Flower Moon*.
***Also directed**

JEREMY IRONS (b. September 19, 1948 in Cowes, Isle of Wight, England, UK) won the 1991 Oscar for Best Actor in a Leading Role for *Reversal of Fortune* (1990). He has won two Golden Globes, one in 2007 for Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Series, Mini-Series or Motion Picture Made for Television for *Elizabeth I* (2005) and another in 1991 for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture – Drama for *Reversal of Fortune* (1990). He has been nominated for four Golden Globes, two for Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series – Drama in 2012 for *The Borgias* (2011) and in 1987 for *The Mission* (1986). The other two nominations were for Best Performance by an Actor in a Mini-Series or a Motion Picture Made for Television, in 2010 for *Georgia O'Keeffe* (2009) and in 1983 for *Brideshead Revisited* (1981). He won an Honorary César in 2002. He has acted in 104 films and television programs, including Ridley Scott's upcoming *House of Gucci*, a memorable performance as Ozymandias in Damon Lindelof's 2019 *Watchmen* series**,** *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016), *The Man Who Knew Infinity* (2015), *The Borgias* (2011-2013, TV Series), *Night Train to Lisbon* (2013), *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (2011, TV Series), *Georgia O'Keeffe* (2009, TV Movie), *The Pink Panther 2* (2009), *Appaloosa* (2008), *Inland Empire* (2006), *Casanova* (2005), *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005), *The Merchant of Venice* (2004), *The Time Machine* (2002), *Faeries* (1999), *Poseidon's Fury: Escape from the Lost City* (1999, Short), *The Man in the Iron Mask* (1998), *Lolita* (1997), *Stealing Beauty* (1996), *Die Hard: With a Vengeance* (1995), *The Lion King* (1994), *The House of the Spirits* (1993), *M. Butterfly* (1993), *Damage* (1992), *Waterland* (1992), *Kafka* (1991), *The Beggar's Opera* (1991), *Reversal*

of Fortune (1990), *Dead Ringers* (1988), *The Mission* (1986), *The Wild Duck* (1984), *Swann in Love* (1984), *Betrayal* (1983), *Moonlighting* (1982), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981), *Nijinsky* (1980), *Notorious Woman* (1974, TV Mini-Series), *The Pallisers* (1974, TV Mini-Series) and *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes* (1971, TV Series).

RAY MCANALLY (b. March 30, 1926 in Buncrana, County Donegal, Ireland—June 15, 1989, age 63, in County Wicklow, Ireland) won the 1987 BAFTA Film Award Best Actor in a Supporting Role for *The Mission* (1986). He acted in 64 film and TV series including, *Great Expectations* (1991, TV Mini-Series), *We're No Angels* (1989), *My Left Foot* (1989), *The Sicilian* (1987), *White Mischief* (1987), *The Mission* (1986), *No Surrender* (1985), *Angel* (1982), *The Outsider* (1980), *Dial M for Murder* (1974, TV Series), *The Looking Glass War* (1969), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1965), *Billy Budd* (1962), *Murder in Eden* (1961), *The Naked Edge* (1961), *Shake Hands with the Devil* (1959), *Desert Patrol* (1958), *She Didn't Say No*! (1958) and *Professor Tim* (1957).

AIDAN QUINN (b. on March 8, 1959 in Chicago, Illinois) has acted in 93 films and TV shows, some of which are *Elementary* (2012-2015, TV Series), *Stay* (2013), *Allegiance* (2012), *Prime Suspect* (2011-2012, TV Series), *If I Were You* (2012), *Weeds* (2011, TV Series), *Sarah's Key* (2010), *Flipped* (2010), *The Eclipse* (2009), *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (2007, TV Series), *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (2007, TV Movie), *The Exonerated* (2005, TV Movie), *Shadow of Fear* (2004), *Stolen Summer* (2002), *Songcatcher* (2000), *This Is My Father* (1998), *Michael Collins* (1996), *Looking for Richard* (1996, Documentary), *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994), *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* (1991), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1990), *Crusoe* (1988), *The Mission* (1986), *Desperately Seeking Susan* (1985), *Reckless* (1984)

LIAM NEESON (b. on June 7, 1952 in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, UK) was nominated for an Oscar in 1994 for Best Actor in a Leading Role for *Schindler's List* (1993). He has been nominated for three Golden Globes for Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture (Drama) for *Kinsey* (2004) in 2005, for *Michael Collins* (1996) in 1997, and for *Schindler's List* (1993) in 1994. He has acted in 137 films, some of which are *A Monster Calls* (2016), *Ted 2* (2015), *Entourage* (2015), *Taken 3* (2014), *A Walk Among the Tombstones* (2014), *The Prophet* (2014), *A Million Ways to Die in the West* (2014), *The Lego Movie* (2014), *Third Person* (2013), *Taken 2* (2012), *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), *The A-Team* (2010), *Clash of the Titans* (2010), *Chloe* (2009), *Taken* (2008), *Seraphim Falls* (2006), *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005), *Batman Begins* (2005), *Kinsey* (2004), *Love Actually* (2003), *Gangs of New York* (2002), *Les Misérables* (1998), *Michael Collins* (1996), Before and After (1996), *Schindler's List* (1993), *Under Suspicion* (1991), *The Good Mother* (1988), *The Dead Pool* (1988), *Satisfaction* (1988), *The Delta Force* (1986), *Lamb* (1985), *The Innocent* (1985), *The Bounty* (1984), *Excalibur* (1981), and *Pilgrim's Progress* (1978).

DANIEL BERRIGAN (b. on May 9, 1921 in Two Harbors, Minnesota--April 30, 2016, New York City, New York,) was an American Catholic priest, counterculture peace activist, and poet. Although a lifelong devotee of Notre Dame, he joined the Jesuits directly out of high school in 1939 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1952. In 1954, he was assigned to teach theology at the Jesuit Brooklyn Preparatory School. In 1957 he was appointed professor of New Testament studies at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York. That same year, he won the Lamont Prize for his book of poems, *Time Without Number*. Berrigan developed a reputation as a religious radical, working actively against poverty, and on changing the relationship between priests and laypersons. While at Le Moyne, he founded its International House. From 1966 to 1970, he was the assistant director of the Cornell University United Religious Work (CURW), the umbrella organization for all religious groups on campus, including the Cornell Newman Club, later the Cornell Catholic Community, eventually becoming the group's pastor. Berrigan traveled to Hanoi with Howard Zinn during the Tet Offensive in

January 1968 to "receive" three American airmen, the first American POWs released by the North Vietnamese since the US bombing of that nation had begun. In 1968, he signed the "Writers and Editors War Tax Protest" pledge, vowing to refuse to make tax payments in protest of the Vietnam War. In the same year, he was interviewed in the anti-Vietnam War documentary film In the Year of the Pig, and later that year became involved in radical non-violent protest. He manufactured homemade napalm and, with eight other Catholic protesters, used it to destroy 378 draft files in the parking lot of the Catonsville, Maryland, draft board on May 17, 1968. This group came to be known as the Catonsville Nine. Berrigan was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison, but went into hiding with the help of fellow radicals prior to imprisonment. While on the run, Berrigan was interviewed for Lee Lockwood's documentary *The Holy Outlaw*. The FBI apprehended Berrigan and sent him to prison. He was released in 1972. He now resides in New York City and teaches at Fordham University in addition to serving as its poet-in-residence. Berrigan appears briefly in the film, *The Mission* (1986), playing a Jesuit priest, and also served as a consultant on the film. He has also written for one TV movie and three films which are *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine* (1975, TV Movie), *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine* (1972, play, screenplay), *Der Prozess gegen die Neun von Catonsville* (1972, TV Movie, writer), *Der Prozeß gegen die neun von Catonsville* (1972, TV Movie, play). He has acted in two films, *Howard Zinn: You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train* (2004) and *The Mission* (1986).

Roland Joffé (Wikipedia)

An English-born French film director who is known for his Oscar nominated movies *The Killing Fields* and *The Mission*. He began his career in television. His early television credits included episodes of *Coronation Street* and an adaptation of *The Stars Look Down* for Granada. He gained a reputation for hard-hitting political stories with the series *Bill Brand* and factual dramas for *Play for Today*.

Education Joffé was educated at two independent schools: the Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle in London, and Carmel College in Wallingford, Oxfordshire, which was Europe's only Jewish boarding school, until it closed in 1997. He completed his formal education at the University of Manchester.

TV director

After university, Joffé joined Granada Television as a trainee director in 1973, where he directed episodes of the TV series *Coronation Street*, *Sam*, *The Stars Look Down*, *Crown Court*[] *Bill Brand*, and *Headmaster*

In 1977, producer Tony Garnett was commissioned by the BBC to direct the play *The Spongers* within BBCs *Play for Today* series. He informed the BBC drama department that he wanted to hire Roland Joffé as director, but was told that Joffé did not possess BBC clearance and was regarded a "security risk". The reason was that Joffé had attended some Workers' Revolutionary Party meetings in the early 1970s although he never became a party member. He explained around 1988: "I was very interested in politics at that time. But I was interested in what all the political parties were doing, not just the WRP, and I was never actively involved." Only after Garnett threatened he would "go public", was the veto on Joffé's appointment withdrawn. *The Spongers* won the prestigious Prix Italia award.

Later in 1977, Joffé also directed an episode in BBC's *Second City Firsts*, and in 1978 he directed two more plays for *Play for Today*: *The Legion Hall Bombing* and *United Kingdom*. In 1979, he directed the TV play *No, Mama, No* by Verity Bargate for the *ITV Playhouse* series, and in 1980 he made a version of 17th century dramatist John Ford's play *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* as a TV film for the BBC.

Film director

Roland Joffé's first two feature films (*The Killing Fields*, 1984, and *The Mission*, 1986) each garnered him an Academy Award nomination for Best Director. Joffé worked closely with producer David Puttnam on each film. *The Killing Fields* detailed the friendship of two men, an American journalist for *The New York Times*, and his translator, a prisoner of the Khmer Rouge in Communist Cambodia. It won three Academy Awards (for Best Supporting Actor, Best Cinematography, and Best

Film Editing) and was nominated for four more (including Best Picture and Best Director). *The Mission* was a story of conflict between Jesuit missionaries in South America, who were trying to convert the Guaraní Indians, and the Portuguese and Spanish colonisers, who wanted to enslave the natives. In an interview with Thomas Bird, Joffé says of *The Mission*, "The Indians are innocent. The film is about what happens in the world . . . what that innocence brings out in us. You would sit in a cinema in New York, or in Tokyo, or Paris, and for that point of time you would be joined with your companions on this planet. You would come out with a real sense of a network.". The film won the Palme d'Or and Technical Grand Jury Prize at the 1986 Cannes Film Festival. It achieved six Academy Awards nominations—including for Best Picture, Best Director, and Ennio Morricone's acclaimed Best Original Score—and won one, for Best Cinematography.

Since his initial acclaim, Joffé's film career has been less successful. In 1993, he produced and partially directed a big budget adaptation of the video game *Super Mario Bros.*. The film struggled to make back its budget. His 1995 adaptation of *The Scarlet Letter* was a critical and financial disaster, and his 2007 horror film *Captivity* drew controversy with its advertising billboards, widely regarded as exploitative and misogynistic. He received Razzie Nominations for Worst Director for *The Scarlet Letter* and *Captivity*.

His latest release, *There Be Dragons*, garnered press attention as it dealt with the Catholic organisation Opus Dei A movie about faith and forgiveness, *There Be Dragons* is a project that Joffé says has a message he's proud to say on film. In an interview with CBN.com, he stated, "I have a very deep emotional investment in this film. I feel that I really want to stand behind what it says to us as human beings."

David Williams: "An Interview with Roland Joffé (DVD Movie Guide)

Roland Joffe got an early start at London's National Theater and was actually the youngest director to ever work with the group. A veteran of British theater and television, Joffe got his start working on television shows, as well as documentaries.

Joffe's big screen debut was quite an amazing one, as his rookie film was the critically acclaimed *The Killing Fields* in 1984. Based on the real life experiences of New York Times reporter Sidney Schanberg (who was covering the civil war in Cambodia) and his Cambodian assistant, Dith Pran, the film focused on the rise and fall of Phnom Penh to the Khmer Rouge in 1975. The film was nominated for seven Academy Awards (Picture, Director, Actor, Supporting Actor, Cinematography, Editing, and Screenplay) and would go on to win three (Supporting Actor, Cinematography, and Editing).

Move forward to 1986 and Joffe's sophomore effort - and the reason for this interview - *The Mission*. This visually spectacular film deals with a Spanish Jesuit priest in a Brazilian mission during the late 18th century working to convert the Indians of the region over to Christianity. The film won the 1986 Palme d'Or award for Outstanding Film at the Cannes Film Festival and once again, received multiple Academy Award nods (Picture, Director, Cinematography, Score, Editing, Costume Design, Set Design). However, this time around, the Academy chose only to award the film with a best cinematography Oscar for Chris Menges (who also won for *The Killing Fields*) and decided upon Oliver Stone's *Platoon* for the Best Picture, as well as Best Director awards.

Critical acclaim began to waver on Joffe's next projects (which I cover with Joffe in the interview), with *Fat Man and Little Boy* (1989), a film that dealt with Robert Oppenheimer's work in New Mexico on what would ultimately become the Manhattan Project (for those of you unfamiliar with the project, this was the venture responsible for the development of the world's first nuclear bomb) and *City of Joy* (1992), a film featuring Patrick Swayze as an American doctor working among the poor of India.

Other projects for the director include the upcoming film, *The Invaders*, as well as *Vatel* (2000), *Goodbye Lover* (1999), and the much maligned *Scarlet Letter*, starring Demi Moore in 1995.

Warner Home Video has announced plans for a new Special Edition of the Roland Joffe masterpiece, *The Mission*, for May of this year and in

order to promote the new disc, I was able to spend a few minutes on the phone with Roland earlier this week and discuss his storied career, as well as what it was like revisiting his classic for Warner's new two-disc DVD.

JOFFE: Hello David! What can I do for you today?

DVDMG: Well, it sounds like you've got a really busy day today. I'll try not to take up too much of your time and get your schedule back on track, but I'd like to take a few minutes to talk to you about *The Mission* DVD that's coming out in just a few weeks.

JOFFE: Sure, I'd like that too. Go ahead.

DVDMG: First off, I'm curious how you got your start and what facilitated your move from television and documentary-type films to the big screen.

JOFFE: That's a very good question. You know, I think the way it happens is like this … you know, very good coaches for ski jumpers stand at the top of the slope and actually watch the jumpers prepare rather than standing at the bottom and watching them land, which anyone can do. David Puttnam, who at the time, was a very, very good producer … in some sense, stood at the top of my slope.

I had just done a television film with Colin Welland and David Puttnam had just done *Chariots of Fire* and Colin Welland must have told David that he enjoyed working with me because I got a call from David telling me that he wanted me to come and see him. When I was there, he gave me a screenplay to read which was about 300-pages long and it was called *The Killing Fields*. He said to me, "Look. Just do me a favor and read this and tell me what you think about it." Well, I sat up all night reading it and wrote him a letter afterwards that simply said, "I think this is a wonderful project. Many people will tell you it's a war story – and it's not. If you do this as a war story it will be soon forgotten. It's a love story. If you do it as a love story, the film will just go on forever because it's just extraordinary."

Well, I didn't see David for over a year and around that time I was setting up another project and I met him at BAFTA or some other awards ceremony (*BAFTA: British Academy of Film and Television Arts Awards – David*). He said to me, "What are you doing next year?" I said to him, "Actually, I'm going to be doing a film in Africa." And he said, "Well, I don't think you'll be in Africa." And I said, "Well, I think I *will*." And he told me to come see him in the morning.

When I got there he told me, "Look, this project *The Killing Fields* is taking off and I've interviewed every major director that's wanted to do it and that's been like 30 or 40 of them and I haven't found one who's yet to understand it." Well, my heart started beating real fast and I stammered a bit, "Well … well uhhhh …" and David interrupted me and said, "Do you remember that letter you wrote me?" I said, "Yes. I could quote it word for word." He said, "OK, quote it," and I did. Then, he pulls the letter out of a drawer and he was reading it while I'm quoting it back to him and he says, "Well, that's not bad, but the punctuation's a bit off." [Laughing] Then he asked me, "Do you still believe that?" I told him I absolutely did and he said, "Good. I want you to direct this film."

Well, by this time, my heart had totally stopped and I said, "But David, I've never directed a movie … a feature." He said, "I didn't ask you whether you *had*, I asked if you *wanted* to." Of course I accepted and David said, "Don't worry about it. You'll take to it like a fish out of water. Your television work is busting out of the screen and it simply needs to be on a bigger screen than the TV." And that's how it happened … and I owe that man a lot.

DVDMG: That's an incredible story and how you came in to directing *The Killing Fields* changes my next question somewhat. Even so, I'll ask it anyway because I wanted to know what influences you to tackle such … well, political … or heavy-handed subjects? I know those aren't really good adjectives, but they're all that I can really think of right now. Regardless, what drives you to keep taking on such serious subject matter and projects?

JOFFE: Well, it's kid of weird really because I'm not a very serious person. You know how they

say that clowns are very funny in public and are really sad at home? [Laughing] Well, I'm really kind of stupid at home and I guess, more serious in public.

I don't know really – the themes just sort of come. I think that when you look at our world, the truth is that we're all – all our lives actually - under the influence of politics. Even if we think we're totally free, we're not because so many decisions are being made around us and over us and it's only usually after we're dead that people can look back and say, "Well of course they did *that* because look what was happening over here – look how they were pushed in that direction." And I think that particularly in a democracy, those are the types of things people need to know about and need to be made aware of. Even if we don't know it or aren't aware of it, politics and philosophy are really what make our up lives.

You know, if you spend a whole afternoon just eating popcorn and watching football, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. But, if that's all you do, it means that you get swept along with the tide - without any idea of where you're going. That's OK for some people, but for other people, they kind of want to know where the pebbles are and *why* the tide is pulling them in this direction rather than that direction. And I guess those are the people that I find my movies speaking to. I don't know … does that sound like an answer? [Laughing]

DVDMG: [Laughing] No! That's a great answer!

A lot of your films – more so after *The Mission* - seemed to have received a mixed bag of reviews from critics. Then it seems that after everyone's had a chance to kind of sit back and chew on it a little bit, they seem to change their tune on their initial impressions about the film and you come out back on top. Do you see that as some sort of vindication or do you even look at it that way? Do you simply make films that appeal to you and your target audience?

JOFFE: Well, that's a very good question and I'd like to answer the second part of it first. I like cinema audiences and I respect them and I "talk" to them just like I would anybody I know. Therefore, I've never wanted to do something where I'd berate the audience – but neither have I thought that I'm just gonna do this little bit of fluff and not really care and just try to make some money. I've never been able to do that very well. Maybe I just don't have the talent to do it … [Laughing]

You know, I was in India at a Science Conference where I was invited to speak to a group of Indian astrophysicists and they're building their own rockets and putting their own satellites up … and one of the things they wanted to discuss was *Fat Man and Little Boy*. All the Indian press said the same thing … they mentioned that when the film initially came out, everyone attacked it and now they're reading where people are writing about it and saying how it was prophetic and extremely profound … and it's really nice when things like that happen.

Honestly, I think that the job of movie reviewing can be really tough. When you think that movie reviewers have to review 'X' number of films in a day, 'X' number of films in a week … and sometimes, if a film has layers that need to be thought about, it's easy to get missed the first time around. It's hard to blame someone for that because they simply don't have time. I'm not anti-reviewer or anything – they do the best they can – and they try to be very honest I think.

But I also have the feeling that if the movie's well made and it's about things that count, in the end what will happen is that people will ultimately see the depth in it. *The Scarlet Letter* is a great example. For instance, in *The Scarlet Letter*, I was totally attacked for changing the end of the book – which I hadn't – because the end of the book remained exactly the same. You know, it's not like I went to the library and rewrote it. [Laughing] Then, I was attacked for putting Indians in the film and I'd say, "Wait a minute. If you look at the time, there were more Indians in America – Native Americans – than there were Colonists. So, it seems to me that the problem is Hawthorne's, not mine. If you want to criticize it, you should criticize Nathaniel Hawthorne for *not* putting

Indians in there." So then, a statement like that comes out and shocks people and that's what they decide to write about.

But then what happens, bit by bit, later they start looking at it and thinking, "You know … actually there were Indians there …" It's like the wave breaks and everyone gets furious and then when the tide recedes, people realize that maybe it *was* a good point. Like I said, it's a really nice feeling. A couple of journalists have actually said to me, "God, we're just so harsh on you and we don't know why and then, after three or four years, we decide that we like it a lot."

DVDMG: Well, I guess it's better than three of four years later people coming back and saying they really *didn't* like it. [Laughing] At least they *are* going back and looking at it and admitting their initial impressions were incorrect.

JOFFE: Absolutely. That's why I don't really say much about reviewers. I think it's a very tough job to get all of the depth of a movie all at once.

DVDMG: Well, how did you come about helming *The Mission*?

JOFFE: Well, that came about because after making *The Killing Fields*, Robert Bolt, who is a wonderful screenwriter, met with me and told me about a project that had been on ice for a long, long time. He asked me if I'd be interested in reading it – it was kind of like a stage play actually – and it was just the story of Mendoza and Waraní Indians. I was so fascinated by it – and I knew so little about Latin America – that I decided to take a trip to Latin America to see if I could find the Guarani, who were the original tribe.

Of course, there's absolutely nothing left of them – there's just a small population of indigent people with nowhere to live and it's really, really, sad. They were once a very proud nation really and that touched me emotionally so much that I decided I wanted their story to be told. It was like meeting someone in the street and they tell you something about them and you think that they have a story and life experience that people should know about.

So then I started working with Robert (Bolt). Robert had just had a stroke and he was such a brave man. I mean, he struggled with his language and everything and he sort of fought his way back in front of my eyes. So he knew everything about the story and I'd sort of look into his face … and his eyes … and they'd be full of understanding. Although the words couldn't quite come out, he'd write them down with sort of a shaky hand. I just got more and more involved and I fell in love with the project. I simply felt that it was a great story with some sort of eternal value.

DVDMG: When you were making the film, was it a conscious effort to keep it from becoming an evangelical or were you so determined on telling the story of the tribe that the whole missionary story stayed completely secondary?

JOFFE: Well, it did in a way become secondary … and that's a really good question. You know, I wanted it to be a film about *being evangelical* and what that might mean … good or bad … and that wasn't for me to comment on. I simply wanted to state that during this little slice of history, this is what happened and *these* were the good sides of it, *these* were the more dangerous sides of it, and *this* was the result.

At the end … this is true … the Guarani wanted to keep their musical instruments. And I just felt that there was something so beautiful about what human beings can share and that just became the root of the story for me … that these kids, who after the whole thing, pick up what they need and what they want. And it's funny, look at the situation we're in now with Iraq. What are the *Iraqi's* going to pick up? What are they going to make out of this whole thing? In a sense, wiser heads do say that the Iraqi's will have to pick up what they want and the question remains, "What is it going to be?" That type of question goes right to the heart of what it means to be a human being. Do you know what I'm saying? What do we cherish? What do we care for? What do we want our lives to mean?

Every life *does* have a meaning – and I really do believe that – and I think that's why I try to address my audiences intelligently. The man in the street counts, but sometimes he forgets that he counts. You know, people in the top floor of the apartment looking down at the man in the street forget to tell him he counts too.

DVDMG: So true … So when you were making the film, how did you score all the talent? I mean, you look at the roster now and it's almost like an all-star list of people you'd want to be in a film if you could pick and choose.

JOFFE: Yeah, it's funny isn't it? There was Liam Neeson, who was just beginning his career … and DeNiro … and you know, I just got people to read the screenplay. DeNiro read it and loved it and really wanted to do it. We both thought it'd be a great stretch for him; a different kind of part.

DVDMG: Yeah. You know, I just read where DeNiro is going to play another missionary in an upcoming film and I'm sorry, I can't recall the name of the film right now.

JOFFE: Yes, I saw that as well. I think he had a wonderful time and I just adored working with him. I'll never forget it … it was just such an experience and such fun … and he's just such a talented guy and ferocious in his own way … and so passionate. He was just a great working companion …

DVDMG: And you were able to get such a subdued performance out of him. Was that a challenge at all or is he just such a consummate professional that it just came?

JOFFE: I think good directing is about getting the performance to be just what's right for the movie. I mean, the actor is concerned with his own bit of it, but the director's somehow trying to work the whole thing into a much bigger picture. It's like conducting an orchestra – you have to make sure the instruments are played as perfectly as they can be, but they have to fit in with the orchestra.

DVDMG: Just a couple of other questions and we'll wrap this up. I know you have a lot of other commitments today.

How did the Special Edition for *The Mission* come to be? Did you approach Warner and let them know you'd really like to revisit the film? Did Warner approach you?

JOFFE: Actually, Warner approached me and told me they were ready to do a DVD for this now and they wanted to know if I'd be interested in helping. I told them I absolutely would be since I like DVDs so much – it's such a better format than VHS.

They came to me and stated that they wanted to restore the print and I was really excited about that – and they took that aspect of it very seriously and they did it very well. They showed it to me, they showed it to Chris Menges … and then I did a director's commentary for it that took me completely by surprise. You know, what basically happens is that you go into a room, the movie is played in front of you, and you speak as you see the images. The whole thing just came back to me David – the whole experience and what it was like - and I think that will be a lot of fun for audiences to get the same stream of consciousness that was going through my head at the time. It was very exciting to suddenly recall what I was feeling at the time.

DVDMG: What was it like revisiting the film after all this time? I know you've worked on other things and have moved on to other projects and although I'm sure you haven't forgotten about the film, what was it like totally involving and immersing yourself back into *The Mission* again for the purposes of this DVD?

JOFFE: It was like a time trip. I was amazed David at how much I was *completely* taken back when the first chord of that music started and when that first image popped up. I could recall what it was like writing it, what it was like working with Robert, and on to how extraordinary it was being in Latin America, which is an amazing place to be in. I could remember what it was like building relationships and living with the tribe for a certain amount of time and convincing them to be in the film … I mean *everything* came back to me and it was just an amazing experience. It really was like a time trip.

"*The Mission*" (SDG Reviews)

In spite of Chris Menges' lush, Oscar-winning cinematography, Ennio Morricone's outstanding score, an intelligent screenplay by Robert Bolt, and admirable performances from Jeremy Irons and Robert De Niro, there was some feeling that the film simply didn't hold together.

Roger Ebert's complaint was not uncommon: "*The Mission* feels exactly like one of those movies where you'd rather see the documentary about how the movie was made. You'd like to know why so many talented people went to such incredible lengths to make a difficult and beautiful movie — without any of them, on the basis of the available evidence, having the slightest notion of what the movie was about."

Culture critic Michael Medved went so far as to label the film anti-religious, on the grounds that it focused on cowardly eighteenth-century ecclesiastical officials who sold out idealistic Jesuit missionaries and their converts to profit-minded Portuguese imperialists and slave traders. Yet in 1995, the papal committee compiling the Vatican film list numbered *The Mission* among fifteen films noteworthy for special religious significance.

Haunting imagery

About two things, at least, Ebert was undoubtedly correct: *The Mission* is a difficult film, and it is a beautiful one.

That it's artfully photographed is hardly a surprise: Joffé, Menges, and producer David Puttam previously collaborated on *The Killing Fields*, which also won an Oscar for cinematography. And the film's Amazon valley setting, with its stunning vistas and magnificent Iguassu Falls, provides photogenic subject matter.

But the beauty of *The Mission* goes beyond landscapes or camerawork. From the unforgettable opening sequence, with its stunning depiction of the martyrdom of a silent Jesuit missionary at the hands of equally silent South American natives, the film is shot through with piercing, haunting imagery, pictures of enduring imaginative force.

Screenwriter Robert Bolt was also responsible for *A Man for All Seasons* (also on the Vatican film list for religious significance), Fred Zinneman's incomparable film about the last years of St. Thomas More, who was martyred under King Henry VIII.

The differences between that film and this one are striking. *A Man for All Seasons* is driven by dialogue; it sparkles and burns with Thomas More's own love of words. Bolt said that in writing it he strove to create "a bold and beautiful verbal architecture" evocative of the quality and subtlety of More's inner life.

By contrast, the strongest moments in *The Mission* are wordless. Indeed, throughout most of the first third of the film the characters don't speak much at all; their actions speak for them.

Witness the electric first moments of contact between the hostile natives from that first great scene and the next Jesuit missionary who, not yet speaking their language, dares to venture into their territory armed only with an eloquently nonverbal profession of good faith and peaceable intentions. Or the stubborn, dogged determination of a guilty, broken man quite literally bound to the evils of his past, clinging to a promise of hope that is all that stands between him and despair. Or the shattering, liberating power of redemption that comes in an unexpected and moving way. Or the touching rituals with which a transformed community embraces a man it has every reason to spurn.

The story behind the story

But it's also a difficult film. Though it shares creative ties with *A Man for All Seasons* and *The Killing Fields*, few will find *The Mission* as immediately accessible or as gripping as either of those two powerful films. The drama here seems diffuse, without an obvious center, or even an obvious protagonist. Of three key characters, it's possible to pick out the most admirable, the most venal, and the most tragic; but the plot is not obviously *about* any of their stories.

In simplest terms, *The Mission* is a fictionalized account of a historical event that was both an atrocity and a tragedy. Here are the background events, as I understand them.

In 1750 Spain and Portugal signed a treaty renegotiating a borderline between Spanish and Portuguese territories in South America, with Portugal taking control of a previously Spanish region on the Paraguay River. In this region were a number of mission communities, founded by the Society of Jesus, where thousands of native Guaraní converts lived. These missions (called "*reducciones*" or "reductions") were not simply spiritual centers, but thriving economic communities where converts worked together and prospered.

The Jesuit missionaries, who were ardent champions of the Pope, strongly opposed slavery, an institution long condemned by Rome. The Vatican had particularly condemned the enslavement of the newly discovered peoples of the Americas; but social acceptance of this teaching (as of the Church's condemnations of dueling in the nineteenth century or of abortion today) was limited and partial. Spain had anti-slavery laws, but Portugal didn't; and naturally the Guaraní — who even under the Spanish administration were already being covertly hunted by Portuguese slavers with the tacit support of opportunistic Spanish governors — deeply resented the transfer of power.

Once the Spanish withdrew, the only protection remaining to the Guaraní would be the Jesuit *reducciones*. The Portuguese, of course, wished to see the missionaries depart from the region together with the Spanish civil authority.

In spite of this, the Jesuit missions might possibly have been able to remain in the new Portuguese territories with Vatican support. However, some ecclesiastical officials apparently found this politically inexpedient. Because of the Jesuits' opposition to slavery and their strong defense of the papacy, the Order was already a political target in some European countries. If the missions succeeded in openly thwarting the Portuguese in South America, some officials feared that the Portuguese government would retaliate by expelling the Jesuits from Portugal, leading to similar setbacks throughout Europe.

Thus, in the name of protecting the Order on the Continent, the missionaries were ordered to abandon the *reducciones* and send their converts back to their native ways of life. (Ironically, both the ecclesiastical effort to protect the Society of Jesus, and the Portuguese effort to overcome the Jesuit agenda, eventually failed. Despite the withdrawal from South America, the Jesuits were expelled from Portugal, and within 25 years the order had been officially suppressed by the Vatican. On the other hand, the disputed territories were soon returned to Spanish control; and ultimately slavery was abolished throughout the entire region, and the Guaraní slaves emancipated.)

The Mission tells the story of one company of missionaries who defy the order to leave their mission, defending the right of their converts to remain in their new home. Some of these priests, led by a novice named Mendoza (De Niro), even actively lead the Guaraní in guerrilla warfare against the Portuguese forces who eventually arrive to expel them — despite bitter opposition from their own leader, Fr. Gabriel (Irons), who insists on a path of peaceful disobedience and spiritual devotion. Inevitably, "neither approach is effective", as Ebert sees it; and the conclusion is as tragic as it is inexorable.

Seeking a center

This bare-bones sequence of events is not a film plot, only a history lesson. Examining the plot of *The Mission*, we find that the story divides readily into three acts, each with its own moral crisis. First, there is Mendoza's personal struggle between despair and redemption. Then comes the sad, foregone investigation of Cardinal Altamirano (Ray McAnally), a papal legate nominally sent to inspect the work of the Jesuits in South America, but whose *de facto* mission is to rubber-stamp established plans to abandon the missions. Finally, there is the crisis between Fr. Gabriel and Mendoza over the issue of guerrilla resistance.

The whole film is tied together with scenes of the guilt-ridden Cardinal Altamirano dictating a barbed letter to Rome conveying both assurance and disapproval. These scenes seem to place Altamirano's moral crisis at the heart of the drama. Yet Altamirano is the least developed and least interesting of the three key figures, more a symbol of the failure of ecclesiastical officials than a dramatically or morally interesting character that we really care about one way or the other.

The use of Altamirano as a unifying element is, I think, a structural flaw, a mistake. *The Mission* is not about Altamirano — even if perhaps Joffé or Bolt thought it was. Whatever the merits of Michael Medved's take on the film as an indictment of ecclesiastical officials — and whatever the merits of that indictment itself — this is not first of all what the film is about. *The Mission* is about Fr. Gabriel and Mendoza: about the struggle for Mendoza's soul,

about their campaign to save the Guaraní, and about the spiritual and moral implications of the two different paths of resistance they take.

Part of the reason some viewers may feel unsure "what the movie was about" is that, while it's apparent which of the two priests we're meant to side with, it's not necessarily obvious why. Both men, although sworn religious under vows of holy obedience, disobey their superiors: so why is it right for Fr. Gabriel to disobey Altamirano by staying at the mission, but wrong for Mendoza to disobey Fr. Gabriel by leading the Guaraní in guerrilla resistance? The Church upholds just-war theory, and certainly the Guaraní are the aggrieved victims, so why shouldn't they defend their home?

These are worthy questions, and they have reasonable answers, though unfortunately the film never quite makes these answers entirely explicit.

The first point is that the keeping of vows of obedience, although a normative moral necessity, is not an absolute necessity that applies in all possible circumstances. Given sufficiently grave reason — such as the endangerment of souls — religious can be justified in breaking holy obedience. For the Jesuits to abandon their Guaraní converts, to expel them from their mission homes and return them to the jungle without pastoral guidance or support, would be akin to endangering their souls; and not even a vow of obedience can require a priest to do that.

The second point is a venerable Catholic tradition that — just war or no — priests do not take up arms or engage in military exploits. Regardless whether the Guaraní are justified in violently resisting the Portuguese, Fr. Gabriel insists that, as priests, the Jesuits must provide spiritual support, not military support. "Help them *as a priest*," he passionately exhorts Mendoza. (Incidentally, there's another reason why even the Guaraní are not here justified in violently resisting the Portuguese: They have no hope of success. Just-war theory requires a just struggle to have at least a reasonable chance of bringing about a better state of affairs by resisting than by not resisting. However, the film is not at all concerned with this point, even obliquely.)

The temporal and the eternal

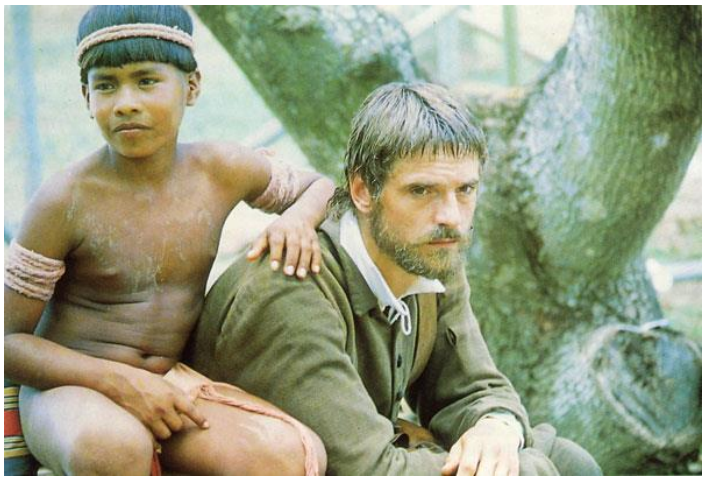
This is not to say that Fr. Gabriel is concerned only with his converts' eternal state but not with their temporal condition. On the contrary, St. James' exhortation to look after the bodily needs of the poor as well as their spiritual needs was the whole point of the ambitiously utopian Jesuit *reduccion* mission communities.

During Altamirano's inspection of the Guaranís' living conditions on their *reducciones*, a haughty Spanish official opposing the Jesuits' resistance to the slave trade sniffs, "I see no difference between this plantation and my own." Whereupon Fr. Gabriel answers emphatically: "That *is* the difference: This plantation is *theirs*." It is precisely this for which Fr. Gabriel contends, and for which he is willing in the end to die — though not, as a priest, to kill.

In fact, concern for the temporal is so evidently a theme in *The Mission* that some Christian viewers have been concerned about possible "liberation theology" implications in the film. In its more extreme forms, liberation theology was a purely temporal ideology that merged into Marxism. Yet to me at least it seems clear that the admirable figure here is the gentle martyr Fr. Gabriel, not the armed warrior Mendoza; the film doesn't seem to be an *apologia* for armed revolution. Nor is it possible to limit the scope of the film's interest, like that of Marxism, to the merely temporal; clearly the spiritual matters here as well.

It's probably a moot point anyway; liberation theology is effectively dead, at least in Catholic circles. To charge a particular film with promoting liberation theology is like saying that *The Three Musketeers* promotes dueling: That might have been an issue once, but not today.

The Mission is not a perfect film, but it is a rich, challenging one that explores the spiritual and the temporal, and the relationship between them, in a thought-provoking way. It contains moving images of despair, penance, and redemption that are among the most evocative ever filmed. It offers a positive depiction of Catholic missionaries as selfless champions and defenders of indigenous peoples and their ways of life rather than as oppressors or imperialists. It begins and ends in martyrdom — in bearing witness, signed in blood. It deserves attentive watching and thoughtful reflection.



Frederick and Mary Ann Brussaat, "The Mission": *Spirituality & Practice*

This is a powerful, compelling, and spiritually stirring film directed by Roland Joffe (*The Killing Fields*) and written by Robert Bolt (*A Man For All Seasons*). Filmed entirely on location in Colombia, South America, *The Mission* won the Golden Palm (Best Film) Award at the 1986 Cannes Film Festival.

In 1750 in the rain forest of central South America, Guarani Indians tie a Jesuit priest to a tree, push this crucifix into the river rapids, and watch it plunge over the majestic Iguazu waterfalls. Soon Father Gabriel (Jeremy Irons), another Jesuit, arrives to carry on the work of the martyred priest. After scaling the cliffs beside the falls, he takes out an oboe and begins to play. Indians emerge from the dense jungle and surround him. Through the music, however, they recognize him as a man of peace and take him into their midst.

Meanwhile, in the town of Asuncion below the falls, European settlers have built a plantation economy on slaves supplied by mercenaries like Rodrigo Mendoza (Robert De Niro). During a raid for Indians above the falls, Mendoza encounters Gabriel and learns that the Jesuits are building a mission there.

Months later, Mendoza and Gabriel meet again. In a fit of jealous anger over losing his mistress, Mendoza has killed his brother, and he has sunk into a deep depression. Gabriel challenges him to have the courage to live and to choose a penance for his crime. When the priest, Fielding (Liam Neeson), and other Jesuits next climb the cliffs by Iguazu Falls, Mendoza is with them, dragging behind him a sack filled with his armor and sword. At the mission, the Guarani people, whom he had once persecuted, welcome him into their community. Eventually, Mendoza takes vows to become a member of the Jesuit order.

The work of the mission, however, is threatened by political developments. The Spanish and Portuguese crowns have signed a treaty that transfers the territory where the missions are located from Spanish to Portuguese jurisdiction. Altamirano (Ray McAnally), an emissary from the Pope in Rome, arrives to decide whether the missions will remain under the protection of the Church.

At a public hearing, Altamirano listens as Gabriel asserts that the Guarani Indians are naturally spiritual people. Without the missions, they will have no protection from slavery, which is legal in Portuguese territory. The colonists, including Don Cabeza (Chuck Low), representing Spanish interests, and Hontar (Ronald Pickup), representing the Portuguese, protest that the Church must submit to political realities.

Altamirano postpones his decision until he can visit the Jesuit settlements. At the large mission of San Miguel, he is impressed by the economic prosperity and the equal distribution of the wealth to all members of the community. In the workshops and the large adobe church, he marvels at the craftsmanship of the artisans and the musical genius evident in the Indians' orchestras and choirs. But he also recognizes that the missions pose an economic threat to the European plantations. Traveling to Gabriel's remote mission of San Carlos, Altamirano is deeply moved by the simple lifestyle and remarkable faith of the Guarani.

Nevertheless, Altamirano tells the Indians that they must leave San Carlos. He orders the priests to accept the transfer of the mission territories. In private, he explains to Gabriel that the future of the Jesuit order in Europe depends upon their not resisting the political authorities in South America.

The Guarani, unmoved by political arguments and unable to understand what Altamirano says is the will of God, decide to defend their home. Mendoza, encouraged by an Indian boy (Bercelio Moya) who has become his closest friend, renounces his vow of obedience as a Jesuit and chooses to fight alongside them.

Gabriel will not abandon his congregation but cannot take up arms. As European troops close in on the mission, he assembles the women and children as a choir in front of the church. When their singing does not stop the attack, Gabriel leads a procession into a hail of bullets armed only with the sacraments and the cross.

The Mission depicts the challenge of conscience that confronts us all in a world convulsed by power, greed, and violence. Its power lies in the way it convinces us that the fierce conflict-ridden world we see on the screen is similar to the one in which we live today. At the same time, *The Mission* is a deeply moving film that reminds us of the vitality of love, the miracle of grace, and the transforming power of acts of conscience.

This two-disc special edition DVD contains a full-length commentary by director Roland Joffe; film highlights from the cast, director, and writer; and the theatrical trailer. There is also a looks at the besieged tribal people, the Waunana Indians, who live there and who portrayed the Guarani in the film.

Historical Basis (Wikipedia)

The Mission is based on events surrounding the Treaty of Madrid in 1750, in which Spain ceded part of Jesuit Paraguay to Portugal. A significant subtext is the impending suppression of the Jesuits, of which Father Gabriel is warned by the film's narrator, Cardinal Altamirano, who was once himself a Jesuit. Altamirano, speaking in hindsight in 1758, corresponds to the actual Andalusian Jesuit Father Luis Altamirano, who was sent by Jesuit Superior General Ignacio Visconti to Paraguay in 1752 to transfer territory from Spain to Portugal. He oversaw the transfer of seven missions south and east of the Río Uruguay, that had been settled by Guaraní and Jesuits in the 17th century. As compensation, Spain promised each mission 4,000 pesos, or fewer than 1 peso for each of the approximately 30,000 Guaraní of the seven missions, while the cultivated lands, livestock, and buildings were estimated to be worth 7–16 million pesos. The film's climax is the Guaraní War of 1754–1756, during which historical Guaraní defended their homes against Spanish-Portuguese forces implementing the Treaty of Madrid. For the film, a re-creation was made of one of the seven missions, São Miguel das Missões.

Father Gabriel's character is loosely based on the life of Paraguayan saint and Jesuit Roque González de Santa Cruz. The story is taken from the book *The Lost Cities of Paraguay*by Father C. J. McNaspy, S.J., who was also a consultant on the film. The waterfall setting of the film suggests the combination of these events with the story of older missions, founded between 1610–1630 on the Paranapanema River above the Guaíra Falls, from which Paulista slave raids forced Guaraní and Jesuits to flee in 1631. The battle at the end of the film evokes the eight-day Battle of Mbororé in 1641, a battle fought on land as well as in boats on rivers, in which the Jesuit-organised, firearm-equipped Guaraní forces stopped the Paulista raiders. The historical Altamirano was not a cardinal sent by the Pope, but an emissary sent by the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Ignacio Visconti, to preserve the Jesuits in Europe in the face of attacks in Spain and Portugal.

COMING UP IN THE FALL 2021 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS 43:

November 2 Mike Nichols CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR (2007)
November 9 Asghar Farhadi A SEPARATION (2011)
November 16 Hsiao-Hsien Hou THE ASSASSIN (2015)
November 23 Chloé Zhan NOMADLAND (2020)
November 30 Rob Reiner THE PRINCESS BRIDE (1987)

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…email Bruce Jackson **bjackson@buffalo.edu**
....for cast and crew info on any film: **http://imdb.com/**

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