

## ***Diablo, familia y propiedad / Devil, Family and Property***

Directed by: Fernando Krichmar (Grupo de Cine Insurgente)

Digital editing: Pablo Liñan

Non-linear editing: Andrés Larken and Brian Psenne

Produced by: Grupo de Cine Insurgente

Date: 1999

Country: Argentina

Language: Spanish (no subtitles)

Running time: 90'

*Diablo, familia y propiedad* is a documentary about the history and current state of the extremely exploitative working conditions at the Ledesma sugar mill (Argentine Northwestern Province of Jujuy). The approach of this film is both historico-political and anthropological, insofar as it articulates the symbolic beliefs of the indigenous workers within the broader context of primitive capitalist exploitation, political authoritarianism and State terrorist methods.

The story is structured around the 'myth of the relative' which is about a devil who demanded the life of one or more aboriginal or Creole workers of the sugar mill per year in exchange for the plantation's prosperity: this is blood pact between the company's administration and the forces of evil. But strangely, those who 'disappeared' have always been precisely those who expressed their disagreement with the extremely exploitative conditions of work in the sugar mill (any dissidents, either activists or just rebels). It is within the very specificity of this particular myth that the agents of class struggle are clearly represented in the film. Godard's words as the epigraph that introduce the film are eloquent about this emphasis on class struggle: 'Against nowadays' cinema that thinks of itself as being liberated, for which nothing is taboo, except class struggle.'

The film is framed, at the beginning and at the end, with a popular gathering in the town's main square, where people are listening to the famous actress Leonor Manso reciting a poem by León Felipe about 'knowing all the stories'. A key verse of the poem in terms of its relevance to the film's main issue is one that powerfully reads: 'the fear of man which has invented all the stories', thus hinting at the myth of the relative.

The documentary contains interviews with *caciques* / indigenous tribal chiefs from many indigenous tribes related to the area (Tobas, Guaranís, Wichis, Tapietes, Chiriguanas) and workers of the sugar mill who express their mixed feelings towards the relative: extreme fear and fascination. An anthropologist specialised in the *Toba* ethnic group is also interviewed and he maintains that there is something critical and challenging in the very figure of the relative, because through it, for the people, there is something profoundly negative and evil associated to the fact of producing sugar (the habitat of the relative is the factory). Consequently, as director Krichmar stated, 'this tale was also a rejection of the working conditions experienced in the sugar mill': a 'perfect combination of the oppressive and the liberating'.

On the political side, the Ledesma company has always had close relationships with the forces of repression (the military and the police) since it was founded at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The sugar mill owner and administrators are held responsible for collaborating with the last dictatorship's kidnappings and forced disappearance of people: they worked closely with the State's information services and they provided vehicles, a runway for aircraft and money. The film

shows interviews with Human Right activists and relatives of people disappeared during the last Argentine dictatorship who very clearly establish the the sugar mill's connections and compromises with the ruling regimes. The owner of the sugar mill, Nelly Arrieta de Blaquier, is also interviewed; her pointing of the blame at people for not wanting to work obscenely contrasts with edited images of the protests of the unemployed of the North-Western area of the country fighting for work, within a context of massive redundancies in Blaquier's sugar mill. There is TV and video footage of a major roadblock in Jujuy in the late 1990s, the subsequent brutal repression and the people's heroic three-day-long resistance. As a result of this cruel repression, 80 protesters were injured and 27 arrested, but the protest was successful, because the 200-man gendarmerie could not clear the 150 protesters, and had to leave the streets in shame.

The closing images are of artificially coloured sugar plantations, with the accompanying song *Se viene el estallido / The Explosion Is Coming* as soundtrack.

Real characters are presented on location

### **RELATED INFORMATION**

Other documentaries by Fernando Krichmar include:

*Asamblea: ocupar es resistir / Assembly: To Occupy Is To Resist* (2004)

*Por los cinco ¡Libertad a los presos políticos del imperio! / For The Five, Freedom to the Political Prisoners of The Empire* (2003)

*Las Madres en la rebelión / The Mothers in The Rebellion* (2002)

*Por un nuevo cine en un nuevo país / For A New Cinema in A New Country* (2001)

*De Marquetalia a Bogotá / From Marquetalia To Bogotá* (2000)

*Diablo, Familia y Propiedad / Devil, Family and Property* (1999)

*L'hachumyajay (nuestra manera de hacer las cosas)/L'hachumyajay (Our Way of Doing Things* (1997)

Information on Fernando Krichmar includes:

<http://www.cineinsurgente.org/http://www.cinenacional.com/personas/index.php?persona=12631>

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1141831/>

<http://sindominio.net/upa-molotov/textos/molo36/krichmar.htm> [interview with Fernando Krichmar]

[http://www.segundoenfoque.com.ar/camara\\_accion.htm](http://www.segundoenfoque.com.ar/camara_accion.htm) [about ADOC]

Vieira, Else R P. *Interview with* Fernando Krichmar

<http://www.modern-languages.qmul.ac.uk/hispstudies/ladocs/argentinadirectors/index.htm>

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AHRC Project [Brazilian and Argentine Documentary Film-Making](#)

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