

Memoria del saqueo / Social Genocide

Directed and produced by: Fernando Solanas
Production: Cinesur S.A. (Argentina) ADR Productions (France) Thelma Film AG (Switzerland)
Cinematography: Alejandro Fernández Mouján and Fernando Solanas
Montage: Juan Carlos Macías, Fernando Solanas, Sebastián Mignona and A. Ponce
Date: 2003
Country: Argentina
Language: Spanish (English subtitles)
Running time: 120'
Availability in the UK: Queen Mary, University of London, Library

Memoria del saqueo is the first of a series of five documentaries about post-2001 Argentina. Although translated into English as *Social Genocide*, *Memoria del saqueo* literally means 'memory of the plundering', which reveals the emphasis of the film: the exploitative plundering that the Argentine people have suffered and are suffering – particularly since the early 1990s – from those in power (the exploitative association of a corrupt local political class with multinationals and global financial institutions). First and foremost a political denunciatory film, *Memoria del saqueo* concentrates its denunciation on the causes and mechanisms of the plundering, rather than on its victims or effects. The subsequent films of the series – such as *La dignidad de los nadie* / *The dignity of the nobodies* – explore the people's responses to the crisis brought by such plundering, and also, the possibilities of change (*Argentina latente / Latent Argentina*).

The sequence that presents and introduces the film is a montage that alternates close-up shots of a poor child and low angle shots of tall city buildings, and this alternating montage progressively reaches a superimposition of both sets of shots: deprived child/city building is a synthetic image which suggests that extreme deprivation and rich financial institutions are two sides of the same coin. That is to say: 'eternal debt' / social genocide as the two terms of a perfect equation in a globalised Third World country like Argentina. The introduction puts the documentary into a specific frame and anticipates its ending: the events of the 19th and 20th of December 2001 as the spontaneous response of the *pueblo* [people] to the corrupt plundering, and as a starting hope for hope ('The Beginning of the End' is the title of the last chapter).

The initial questions that the film seeks to answer are: 'How is it possible that in a land as rich as Argentina, people experience so much hunger? What has happened in Argentina?' The ten chapters that follow are Solanas' responses to such questions. The first two provide a historical approach to the answer, considering Argentina's economic and political history: 'The Eternal Debt' – through an endless foreign debt, ties of dependency are traced back to president Rivadavia in the 1820s – and 'Chronicle of the Betrayal', which reads Argentine post-dictatorship history – from Alfonsín to De la Rúa – as a constant betrayal of the people by the political class. The following six chapters – The Republican Degradation, The Economic Model, The Privatisations, Oil, Corporatism and Mafia Power, Mafia Power – explain the economic and political mechanisms of the plundering as a result of an alliance of globalised colonial interests and a corrupt political class which implemented neo-liberal policies. Massive privatisations, de-nationalisation of the economy and high unemployment are the keywords for such a neo-liberal model. The last two chapters turn the focus from the powerful to the powerless: they deal with the effects of this plundering model. *Social Genocide* is about the human victims of a silent, everyday violence which

produced more deaths and emigration than the State terrorism and the Malvinas/Falklands war of the last Argentine dictatorship (1976-83). 'The Beginning of the End' is about popular responses to this severe crisis caused by plundering: marches, mobilisations, upheavals, *cacerolazos* [a form of popular protest consisting of people banging pots and pans which was used in 2001 Argentina by middle class citizens – especially women – to express their anger and discontent after their savings had been frozen by the government], rebellions, as signs of hope for a way out. The only possibility of hope to change Argentine history is thus placed in the hands of the people and their social movements. In this respect, the film draws a comparison between December 2001 and the two most important – and remembered – spontaneous appearances of the Argentine people on the public scene during the 20th century: the Peronist Loyalty Day (17/10/1945) and the Cordobazo (29/05/1969). The documentary is followed by a section on 'The Making' of it.

The film is dedicated to 'all those who resisted all these years, to their dignity and courage'.

Real characters are presented on location.

RELATED INFORMATION

Other documentaries by Fernando Solanas include:

La hora de los hornos. Notas y testimonios sobre el neocolonialismo, la violencia y la liberación / Notes and Testimonies About Neo-Colonialism, Violence and Liberation (1966-68) (co-directed with Octavio Getino)

Perón: Actualización político-doctrinaria para la toma del poder (1971) (co-directed with Octavio Getino)

Perón: la revolución justicialista / Perón: the Justicialist Revolution (1971) (co-directed with Octavio Getino)

La mirada de los otros / The Gaze of the Others (1980)

La dignidad de los nadie / The Dignity of the Nobodies (2006).

Fiction films by Fernando Solanas include:

Los hijos de Fierro / Fierro's Sons (1973)

Tangos: El exilio de Gardel / Tangos: Gardel's Exile (1986)

Sur / The South (1988)

El viaje / The Journey / The Voyage (1992)

La nube / The Cloud (1998)

Afrodita, el sabor del amor / Aphrodite, the Taste of Love (2001)

Books and articles by Fernando Solanas include:

Solanas, Fernando and Getino, Octavio. *Cine, cultura y descolonización / Cinema, culture and de-colonisation*. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1973.

Solanas Fernando and Getino, Octavio. 'Towards a Third Cinema', in Michael Chanan (ed), *Twenty-five Years of the New Latin American Cinema*, London: BFI, 1983.

Solanas, Fernando and Getino, Octavio. 'Hacia un Tercer Cine'. *Cine Cubano*, nº 120, 1 November 1987, pp. 57-59.

Solanas, Fernando. *La mirada: Reflexiones sobre cine y cultura*, Buenos Aires: Puntosur, 1989.

Solanas, Fernando. *Una passione latinoamericana: le confessioni cinematografiche di un autore argentino*. Parma: Pratiche Editrice, 1992.

Books and articles on Fernando Solanas include:

Audé, Françoise. 'Memoire d'un saccage'. *Positif*, nº 523, 1 September 2004, pp. 20-21. [on *Memoria del saqueo*]

Chanan, Michael. 'The Changing Geography of Third Cinema'. *Screen*, Winter 1997, 38: 4, pp. 372-388.

Cruz Carvajal, Isleni. 'Sobre la política de la traición'. *Kinetoscopio*, nº 72, 1 October 2005, pp. 50-53. [on *Memoria del saqueo*]

D'esposito, Leonardo. 'Estrenos: Generalizaciones sin el General'. *El Amante Cine*, nº 143, 1 March 2004, pp 8-9. [on *Memoria del saqueo*]

Estève, Michel. *Le pouvoir en question: essai sur la dignite de l'homme a l'ecran*. Paris: Cerf, 1984.

Frias, Isaac León (comp). *Los años de la conmoción 1967-1973: entrevistas con realizadores sudamericanos*. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1979.

Getino, Octavio and Velleggia, Susana. *El cine de las historias de la revolución: Aproximación a las teorías y prácticas del cine político en América Latina (1967-1977)*. Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Altamira, 2002.

Grant, Barry Keith (ed). *Documenting the Documentary: Close Readings of Documentary Film and Video*. Detroit, MI : Wayne State University Press, 1998.

Lopez Ana. 'Argentina 1955-76, The Film Industry and the Margins', in King, John and Torrents, Nissa (ed), *The Garden of the Forking Paths: Argentine Cinema*, London: BFI, 1988.

Monteagudo, Luciano. *Fernando Solanas*. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1993.

Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton, NJ - Oxford : Princeton University Press, 2001.

Stam Robert. 'The Hour of the Furnaces and the Two Avant-Gardes'. *Millenium Film Journal*, Fall-Winter 1980-1981, nº 7-9, pp. 151-166.

Trerotola, Diego. 'Llego tarde'. *El Amante Cine*, nº 144, 1 April 2004, p. 48. [on *Memoria del saqueo*]

Website on Fernando Solanas:

<http://www.pinosolanas.com/>

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

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

Annotated by Guillermo Olivera

Postdoctoral Research Assistant, 2005-06

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

Project Director: Else R P Vieira

Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary, University of London

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