

Idi i Smotri

("Come and See")

U.S.S.R : 1985 : dir. Elem Klimov :

: 146 min

prod: : scr: Ales Adamovich & Elem Klimov : dir.ph.:

[Alexei Kravchenko](#)

Olga Mironova; Lubomiras Lauciavicus; Vladus Bagdonas; Y. Lumiste; Victor Lorents;

K. Rabetsky; E. Tilcheyev

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Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"The film is set in White Russia in 1943 and is based on *"The Story of Khatyn"*, written by Ales Adamovich. Flera, a young man, joins up with the partisans, to his mother's great grief. His family, along with the rest of the villagers, are murdered by the Nazis. This production once again proves that the Russians are true masters at recounting the horrors of Nazi occupation. The technical achievements, as much as the acting, are powerful and excellent. US title: **"GO AND SEE"**. **** "

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001 review:

"Thoroughly mesmerising chronicle of the initiation of a young teen (impressively played by Kravchenko) into the horror and insanity of war, as the Nazis maraud through northwestern Russia in 1943. An extra-ordinary film about the need to maintain one's humanity and dignity no matter what the situation. Don't miss this one. ***½ "

The Time Out Film Guide review:

"Soviet Byelorussia, near the Polish border, 1943. Florya, a young partisan, left behind as his unit moves to prepare for a renewed German advance, returns to his village to find only a mass of bodies, including those of his family, and later witnesses the entire population of a nearby town being machine-gunned and burnt to death. This epic, allegorical and traumatising enactment of the hellish

experience of war (especially its effect upon a generation of the Soviet people) is rendered by Klimov - albeit unintentionally - as a disorienting and undifferentiated amalgam of almost lyrical poeticism and expressionist nightmare."

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

"During World War II, a provincial teenager experiences the horrors of war as the Nazis ravage Byelorussia. In Russian with English subtitles. Unrated, but far too upsetting for children. **** "

The Virgin Film Guide review:

"A highly charged, emotionally exhausting indictment of war and the inhumanity of the Nazis, set in Byelorussia during the 1943 Nazi invasion, **"COME AND SEE"** focuses on the experiences of an adolescent transformed, in a matter of days, from naive boy to worn man. Young Florya (Aleksei Kravchenko) finds a rifle and immediately joins the local freedom fighters, despite the desperate pleas of his mother, who wants to lose neither her son nor the only source of protection for her and her two young daughters. Florya is left behind by the makeshift army and tries to return to his mother, but the Germans launch an air raid, which is followed by an invasion of paratroopers before he can get to his village. Only the most insensitive could sit through **"COME AND SEE"** without being emotionally devastated. From its opening scene, **"COME AND SEE"** descends into a virtual hell on earth

that becomes increasingly frightening as it advances to the final horror. This film won the Grand Prix at the Moscow Film Festival; its director, Elem Klimov, was recently named the head of the Soviet Filmmakers Union. Scr: Ales Adamovich & Elem Klimov, based on "The Story of Khatyn and Others" by Adamovich. ***½ "

Excerpt from **The Films of Steven Spielberg** review of "EMPIRE OF THE SUN":

"It is instructive here to compare **"EMPIRE OF THE SUN"** with Elem Klimov's Soviet film, **"COME AND SEE"** (1985), which also details the horrors of war as seen through the eyes of a child. They are both the work of exceptional

cinéastes, but the emotional atmosphere is different – the difference between the work of a man who knows war basically through war movies, and one whose country's wartime suffering has indelibly scorched itself on his consciousness."

[no listing in "Halliwell's Film Guide", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995" or "Variety Movie Guide 1993"]

A friend of mine once described this as "the best film ever made". Not the best anti-war film, mind you, nor the best Soviet film, but simply the best film ever made. A tall order for any film to meet, and how does it measure against such taxing expectations? The final hour of **"IDI I SMOTRI"** is, as one reviewer above puts it, emotionally devastating. The screen vibrates with hatred and detestation of the Germans, who are seen to revel and delight in their own monstrous depravity. There are no death-in-close-up shots, no depictions of the raping of the peasant women, the film is remarkably sparing with blood, yet the camera lingers remorselessly on the systematic and highly sadistic butchering of an entire village, one of 628 Byelorussian villages, a caption quietly informs us, torched by the nazis along with all their inhabitants. The contemplation of such bestiality, coupled with a bland statistic that it was repeated 627 times in that one region of the Soviet Union alone, leaves any civilised mind feeling contaminated, soiled, and only reinforces the wonder that the Red Army, on its wrathful march to Berlin, suffered a single German soul to survive.

However, the film runs nearly two and a half hours, and the first ninety minutes of it - especially by comparison to what follows - are sluggish and meandering, revealing not so much the insanity of war from the partisans' viewpoint, but the sheer inanity of it. Florya (about 15) is portrayed as a village idiot more than a naive boy soldier, and while we sympathise with his mounting sense of speechless horror and rage, his personality is so poorly defined that identification with him is made very difficult. By the film's close, his blank simpleton face has transformed into a mask of unbearable anguish, so that when a group of nazi officers put a pistol to his head to pose for a snapshot, then slope off leaving him slumped in the mud, it's understood that Florya would much rather they had pulled the trigger, and made forgetting possible. In **"APOCALYPSE NOW"**, Marlon Brando has a long monologue about his first encounter with abject mortal horror (the Vietcong having hacked off the arms of a whole village of children inoculated by Americans), but Florya's face at the end of **"IDI I SMOTRI"** expresses that sentiment far more eloquently, and without any words at all.

It's a weak protest, of course, to say that the film lacks any vein of human warmth or vitality, but the audience brings to a feature film different sensibilities than to a documentary account of war, and this title, for all its cruel power and historical justification, is simply too much an anthem of misery, abject despair and human futility – like many another Russian WW2 film. See, for example, **"ZAMRI - OUMI - VOSKRESNI!"** and **"DETSTVO IVANOVO"**. It rekindles a hatred and sense of outrage that only makes one look again at Germans with a sour, mis-trustful eye. Whether that's a helpful sentiment to leave with its audience I'm not so sanguine.

See subject index under **EASTERN EUROPE / SOVIET BLOC** and **WAR**.

