

A Pivotal Debate in World War II Drama ‘Diplomacy’

Submitted by [NickHC](#) [1] on November 14, 2014 - 8:39pm

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Rating: **3.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – It’s late August in the year of 1944, and Paris is about to be destroyed by a vacating Nazi party. “Diplomacy” is a chamber film that imagines the crucial conversation between a Nazi general and a Swedish diplomat that is said to have saved Paris, a riveting story of personal actions influencing the course of world history.

Adapted from the play of the same title from Cyril Gely, “Diplomacy” begins with Paris in its hostage state during World War II. The Allied forces are moving swiftly towards the City of Lights, which Adolf Hitler had dreamed would one day be topped by Berlin in beauty. Now, the Nazis have decided to destroy Paris on their way out. Intricate bombs are planted around the Seine, torpedoes are aimed at the legs of the Eiffel Tower, and the city’s population of 1.5 million is considered but another casualty of a vicious war.



‘Diplomacy’

Photo credit: Zeitgeist Films

Before this happens, General Dietrich von Chotlitz (Niels Arestrup) looks over the city from his suite in the famous Hôtel Meurice, minutes away from executing the orders given to him by the Führer. He then receives an unexpected visit from Swedish consul-general and lifetime Parisian Raoul Nordling (André Dussollier), who appears in the room using a secret entrance once created by Napoleon III for his actress mistress Elisabeth Aryet. Appealing to Chotlitz through only peaceful manners, the desperate Nordling is faced with the impossible - convince the general to forgo his commands, and to surrender, causing a political move that would confirm the descent of the Nazi party to the rest of the world.

With much of “Diplomacy” happening inside General Chotlitz’s hotel suite, the location’s past of abused power on display in its decor, revered German director Volker Schlöndorff’s observance of a crucial night is bolstered by its simple theatrical staging, which establishes further immediacy on the silver screen. The performances are similarly subtle and sharp, with Arestrup’s general progressively showing the

complications to his actions. As the two wrestle with how much humanity can interfere with work that affects nations, through fascinating stoicism Arestrup reveals Chotlitz’s own unexpected need to follow his orders.



‘Diplomacy’
Photo credit: Zeitgeist Films

As history is continuously uncovered and shared, it’s stories like “Diplomacy” that further articulate the underestimated yet necessary human factor within events that we associate with entire nations and pedestal-topping leaders. Similar to the upcoming Alan Turing film “The Imitation Game” that stars Benedict Cumberbatch, Schlöndorff’s “Diplomacy” harnesses a piece of history that celebrates heroism of a different sort, through action as low-key as a respectful conversation. Nonetheless boasting nerve-wracking high stakes within these arguments, “Diplomacy” is a fascinating display of mind games between two officials with the fate of the world in their words.

“Diplomacy” is now playing at Chicago’s Music Box Theater. Staring Niels Arstrup and André Dussollier. Written by Volker Schlöndorff and Cyril Gely, adapted from Gely’s play. Directed by Schlöndorff. Not Rated.



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By [NICK ALLEN](#) [11]
Editor & Staff Writer
HollywoodChicago.com
nick@hollywoodchicago.com [10]

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