

# Films and Videos as a Source for Group Reflections

## *Some exemplary Guidelines based on the Movie "Mission"*

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A valuable field to promote the use of videos can be the creation of a list of films facilitating a comprehensive exchange of ideas. A review not only of the complex works, such as for example those of Ingmar Bergman, but also of popular movies such as "Sister Act". A study not reduced to explicitly religious films as for instance "The Ten Commandments" but including also those which contain human values like "Dances with Wolves". An analysis of examples like "Blue" as well as those which perhaps do not find our approval but which can be useful for the improvement of our thoughts.

I propose creating lists especially designed to facilitate the conducting of debates, even for those people still not used to working in this field. Obviously a person is still lacking who could coordinate this work and carry on with it constantly, because it is a long, difficult and never ending task.

The following remarks on "Mission" can serve as an example for the type of catalogues I propose, leaving apart all technical aspects.

1. The film starts when Bishop Altamirano dictates his report for the Pope, explaining that should the missionaries be tortured (as the one attached to the cross and thrown down the Iguazú waterfalls) they will be replaced by others. + The report is cinematographic fiction, because the Italian visitor was not a Bishop, he never set foot on missionary territory, on the contrary, he stayed 2,000 kilometres away in Buenos Aires. Does the liberty of the author devalue the opus or even make it possible?
2. The movie later shows the curious beginning of San Carlos: three Jesuits reach the waterfalls, Gabriel goes up, plays the oboe and waits. The Guaraní-Indians accept it. + Is this a question of conquest or approach? Does it mean evangelization or is it mere human action? Obviously Gabriel did not reach the Indians going up the waterfalls, but (more logically) he was going ashore. Why does the author choose this spectacular way?
3. Captain Rodrigo de Mendoza is hunting the Guaraní-Indians. He sells them (naked) to the Spanish governor Cabezas and to the Portuguese Hontar. We see the tragedy of Felipe, Carlota and Rodrigo. + Reflection of the function of slavery for the people in those days.
4. The conversion of Rodrigo de Mendoza occurs in four stages: - Gabriel finds him in a hospital and considers him to be a coward. - Rodrigo reacts and accompanies him, dragging his strange burden. - A Guaraní child solves the problem. - After these experiences have left their mark on Rodrigo, he refuses violence and is not willing to kill a wild boar. + Archaic sentiments of penance; analysis of its pros and cons. The function of the Guaraní Indians to be redeemed of sins. Life in the "reducciones".
5. Bishop Altamirano reaches the town (its name is not mentioned) and a child is singing at a public reception. Cabezas considers him to be a man of gossip, but Rodrigo contradicts. Superior Gabriel obliges him to apologize for this. + The transfer of territories is the subject at stake... as well as the liberty or slavery of the indigenous population: Spain does not accept it, but Portugal however, has passed laws in favour of its facilitation. + The aspect of the soul is mentioned. Where does the soul go to? What significance does this subject have in the way of thinking in those days?
6. The Bishop visits San Miguel, one of the "reducciones". Hontar puts pressure on him owing to a letter from Pombal. The Bishop refuses to read it because he already knows its content. He retires for prayer. The people waiting in front of the Church accompany him. + Study of pressure from both parties. What happens in the mind of the Bishop? Imagination of his discoveries, his surprises. Did he already come with an order in his pocket?
7. Before pronouncing his judgement he accepts to visit another of the "reducciones", San Carlos. Songs, construction, work, cultivation, education. Meeting with Guaraní Indians where Gabriel acts as interpreter. + Analysis of the contents of some sentences and situations: - You should leave, it's the will of the Almighty God, explains the Bishop. - I am also a king, insists one Guaraní chief. - Altamirano orders the Jesuits to abandon the mission. - Both Jesuits disobey the order. One of them takes the non-violent way, the other the violent one. + Could the Bishop have proceeded in a different way?
8. The Guaraní prepare their resistance. The Portuguese start the repression. Massacre. The film ends with children floating on the water, playing the violin once again. + At the end, what do we gain and what do we lose? How can the facts be judged as a whole?
9. The Bishop finishes his report. + If we had to make judgement on his behaviour, should he go to Heaven or to Hell? and why?
10. The film reduces one and a half centuries of missionary work to only two hours. + Explanation of the symbols used for the condensation of this event. + Relation between the cinematographic truth of a docu-drama, which represents this work, and the historical reality.
11. The music of the film is a mixture of renaissance songs, liturgical hymns and indigenous melodies. + What is the significance of this mixture? + What does it indicate?
12. The film exposes the great conflict between the centralist government and the peripheric "reducciones" in Paraguay which were of great political interest at that time. + What has to be changed in the ecclesiastical government in order to avoid these massacres today?