

Berrigan sublime in King of Prussia

by Ken Burke

"The icons of authority make me reach for a hammer" - Emile De Antonio.

In the *King of Prussia*, a new film by Emile De Antonio playing the McInnes Room March 16, is ultimately concerned with shattering things. The film is about the "illegal" shattering of nuclear warhead nose-cones by eight Americans and their subsequent trial, and also attempts to shatter the lethargy of public inaction in the face of the nuclear threat. In doing so, De Antonio may also shatter many people's preconceptions about what films should look like.

The film is a staging of De Antonio's version of the trial of the "Plowshares Eight". The Eight are a group of non-violent peace activists arrested for destroying "property" of General Electric, in this case two nose-cones manufactured for Mark XII nuclear missiles. The eight, who included prominent Jesuit activists Daniel and Phillip Berrigan of '60s draftcard-burning fame, had infiltrated a General Electric plant in the small Pennsylvania town of King of Prussia. They then smashed two nosecones with concealed hammers, and poured vials of their blood over classified documents in the plant. For this crime the Eight faced jail terms of up to 25 years.

Although hesitant at first, De Antonio, a respected radical filmmaker with films on Viet Nam (*In The Year of the Pig*), the Weather Underground (*Underground*), and McCarthyism (*Point of Order*) in his catalogue, agreed to film the trial of the eight. Then complications ensued, with De Antonio taking them all in stride.

The judge (Samuel W. Salus) refused to allow filming of the public trial. De Antonio responded by "making my own trial". Condensing the 1300 pages of transcript into a 70-page script, De Antonio reconstructed the trial, with the Plowshares Eight playing themselves, and 50 actors, including Martin Sheen as Judge Salus, appearing as the court. Then another problem cropped up. His star actors - the Eight - were going to jail.

De Antonio had to schedule filming around available time with the Eight, resulting in a fantastically rushed production schedule. Remarkably, the 90-minute finished film was filmed in just two days. That, plus the film being shot in video and transferred to celluloid later, has resulted in a rough-looking film.

In some places, this rough look is deliberate as in an outdoor scene where the camera lens is wiped off in the midst of filming and one shot in which Daniel Berrigan paces around the courtroom, directly in front of one of the two video units, busily filming away. The sound mix is rough and varied throughout. These are no mistakes of editing, as De Antonio's work throughout is excellent; rather, they serve to keep the viewer aware of the staged nature of his film, and the fact that the Plowshares Eight are actually acting, in one case even reading

directly from a script. As well, after establishing and filming his 'jury' of actors De Antonio uses documentary footage of the actual jury and an interview with a juror.

This demonstration of the "art of the film" only serves to place more focus on the movie's anti-nuclear message and break any illusions of Hollywoodish 'reality'. In the movie, as in reality, the trial served to emphasize "how dangerous it is to seek peace in America", as the film's closing comment states.

The film focuses on the inability of Judge Salus to provide a fair trial for the defendants, and points to the judicial system as the root of this problem. The eight were not allowed testimony by expert witnesses on their motives for the vandalism. Experts such as Daniel Ellsberg (of Pentagon Papers fame) and Robert Aldridge (who designed five generations of thermonuclear devices for Lockheed before becoming a peace activist), were barred from the courtroom because Salus thought the information "irrelevant" to the trial.

"Nuclear warfare is not on trial here, you are," said Martin Sheen in his portrayal of Judge Salus in the film.

The eight attempt throughout to prove their justification of self-defense during the trial. "The U.S. has a gun to all our heads," one of the eight says. While the legal system terms the warheads as "private property", the eight see the weapons as everyone's responsibility, not one company's property. Later in the film, as four of the eight return to the GE plant for a vigil where they are arrested, they are told to get off "private property". Phillip Berrigan summed up much of the film's sentiment when he states, "Private property will kill us all."

The obliviousness, or self-induced ignorance of the plant workers is also reflected in the film. A security guard, between spinning a conflicting story on what happened on the day of the "crime", disclaims any knowledge of what the plant was manufacturing. "I am strictly security," he repeats doggedly to questions of the eight.

Another, more chilling, note is struck by a plant official of 20 years service with GE and 10 years in the nose-cone plant who refuses to acknowledge the nose-cones as a nuclear weapon. Instead, he refers to it inane as "the hardware", as if it were nothing so dangerous as a toaster or blender.

The film truly takes off in the person of Daniel Berrigan, who wafts a presence of sublime peace and human saintliness through the film, even when expressing rage at the stupidity of the system.

"What do we do in such times?" asks Berrigan in his lengthy defense speech in the film. "I could not do what I did," he explained before the courtroom. "These are the hammers of hell," he says, pointing to the warhead shells placed on courtroom display. "These are the hammers that clang the end of the world."

The other members of the eight never approach the beautifully

serene intensity of Dan Berrigan, but they provide role models for action in an age of constant peril. As Molly Rush says to the camera early in the film, "I'm a housewife, and I have six children. I don't think people could perceive me as a heroine."

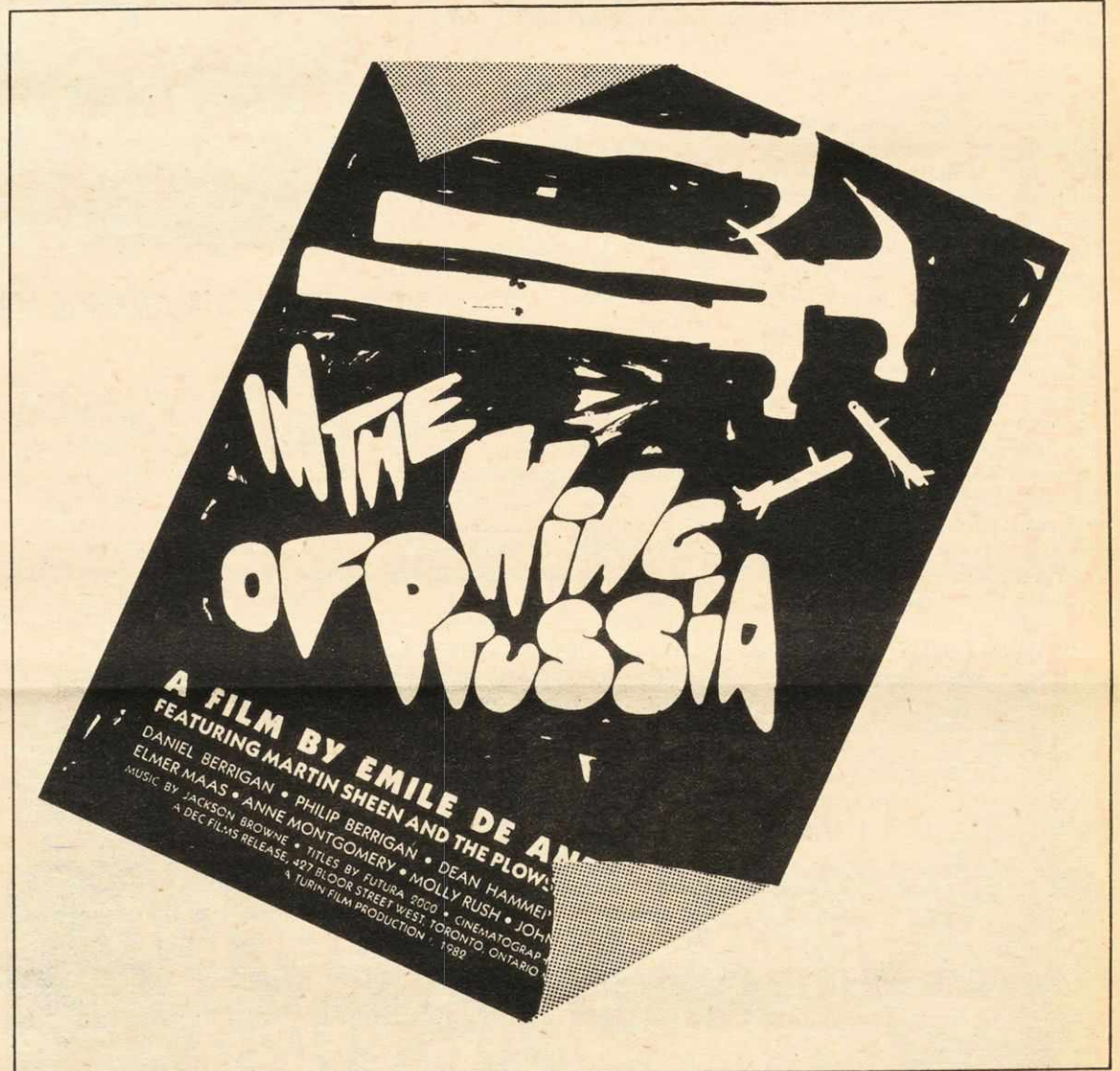
The film is by no means perfect, though. De Antonio at times plays too sentimental with the already-powerful script, such as panning

over the earnest faces of actors in the courtroom audience singing a hymn while awaiting a verdict and lingering overmuch on the scene. The performances at times wear their lack of script memorization and preparation on their sleeves.

The film's strength is mainly with the eight and Dan Berrigan in particular. Martin Sheen has said Berrigan should get an Oscar for

his performance and De Antonio said Berrigan gave the "greatest performance I've ever seen in a courtroom, better even than he did it in the real courtroom."

Watching Berrigan is like viewing a Modern-day Gandhi. As Dan Berrigan said, "I'd like to leave with you, friends and jurors, that great and noble word that is our crime - responsibility."



Dub Rifles a hot Canadian band

by Gary P. LeBlanc

About the hardest working band that I know of is Winnipeg's Dub Rifles. The band handles all of its own affairs including the making of its own records, distribution, promotion and its own finances. Saxophonist Dave Brown says, "Even if it holds us back so called 'commercially,' we want to learn for ourselves." They even publish a newsletter/fanzine intermittently, called Boom, to keep fans up to date on what they're up to.

It took most of last year for the Dub Rifles to cause waves in the Canadian music scene. A great debut 5-track EP, Notown, was recorded in Feb. '82 and sold about 1,000 copies, with a second pressing planned. An "eastern tour" took them as far as Ottawa. Sometimes the Grey Coach Bus Lines were used to transport both band and equipment.

Though many critics have tried to pin the Dub Rifles as a ska

band, the Rifles describe themselves as a 'socially aware' dance band. Their sound is built on two saxes, guitar, bass, drums and vocals by guitarist Colin Bryce and drummer Eloi Bertholet. The music is uptempo with a hint of ska and of soul — so alive and original that it escapes conventional labels.

The Notown EP is filled with solid heartfelt numbers that carry an urgency to get out of the confines of the work by day, TV by night, party on the weekend trap.

"Too many people get caught in the rut of day to day living and never realize their own potential," said Brown. The Rifles believe that work should be a process of personal development.

The Dub Rifles do see money as an obstacle in their growth as a band, yet are all genuinely committed and determined to make it work on their own. Success for them isn't coming over night.

But they are, in fact, making

headway based on the quality of their live shows and recordings. The word is getting around! They appeared on the New Music show three weeks ago and a new single was released last week.

The new single follows the same style set on the first record except that it has a slightly more exciting edge. "Stand," the A side, shows the band can really let go a driving beat. "Testify" and "X" on the B side also reflect a growing talent in song writing. The Dub Rifles remain accessible to all different types of people, dealing with personal politics rather than the usual kind. They may be contacted at: Dub Rifles, PO Box 547 WPG GEN PO, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 2J3, for any info on the band, Boom, and especially the records, all worth getting. The big news for us is that the Dub Rifles will be in Halifax for gigs sometime in June. See you there!