

The Beautiful People at Cannes



by Phyllis Chesler

Once more, the Beautiful People are partying in Cannes for an International Film Festival.

They have given Bad Boy Johnny Depp a standing ovation. All is forgiven or really forgotten for the sake of the business of making movies.

This gathering always takes place at the Hotel Intercontinental Carlton, one town over from Nice where, on Bastille Day in 2016, that infamous Tunisian born ISIS-identified terrorist, Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlet, drove his 19-ton ice cream truck onto the pavement of the Promenade des Anglais, murdering 86 civilians and injuring 434 additional innocents.

A few years after this atrocity, our cruise ship disembarked at Nice, and we drove to Cannes. A good friend of mine had raved about the Hotel Intercontinental Carlton and I thought: Well, why not check out a place so beloved by movie stars?

Just as I was thinking: "Life is pretty good"—the waiter at the hotel's outdoor cafe served us slices of cheese, American style. I was so not impressed. I had to ask, pointedly, for chunks of French cheeses, brie, camembert, roquefort. Then, there was this. At first, the front desk had us shown to rooms with very partial views of the ocean—rooms that were filled with vulgar furniture and odd, difficult to enter showers. I stood my ground until we got a rather perfect room right on the ocean with beautiful vintage French furniture, faded carpet and all.

Life was getting good again—the sunlight and the ocean blue are divine—and that's when I saw them, uniformed Nazi soldiers, shadows really, climbing over the balustrade. What was I seeing and why was I seeing it right here? And so I checked the internet for the history of the hotel. It opened in 1911, a Russian Grand Duke both financed and frequented it, in 1922, the League of Nations had their first meeting there, and Grace Kelly met the Prince of Monaco at this hotel when she was filming Hitchcock's "To Catch a Thief." The Cannes Film Festival officially opened in 1939.

Guess what? The online sites for the hotel, everything that can be found on the internet about the hotel's illustrious history—no Nazis are mentioned. The Nazi "occupation" of the hotel and of southern France—are not mentioned. It is entirely disappeared. Wiped clean. The early twentieth century up through the 1930s are proudly remembered—and then the internet picks it up after World War Two. Nothing to see here. Figments of my overly sensitive, far too overheated imagination.

And so I called upon some academic friends and the late, great Professor Norman Simms, sent me a careful list of the names

and addresses of all those Jews and dissidents who were deported from Cannes and Nice under Vichy rule. It is quite a long list. Alas, I cannot easily find it in my archives.

Here's my point. Telling the truth about what happened might be bad for the hotel business and for tourism in general. Not telling the truth renders us all too vulnerable to repeating the past. And it's not just France who collaborated with Nazis.

Despite exceptions, there are few European countries that did not surrender their Jews to Hitler. Will I never again be able to wholeheartedly enjoy Austria, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Greece, Holland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, or Slovakia—for having given up their Jews to the Nazis? After all, many of these same countries just opposed Abbas's Big Lies at the United Nations on "Nakba" Day, including Croatia, Czechoslovakia, England, Germany, Greece, Lithuania Italy, Netherlands, and Romania.

How can such Nazi shadows ever stop haunting me—especially because so many films are being made about this era, good films too? Even more important, because the rise of Jew hatred around the world is beyond pandemic. How can we ever forget? How can we keep our eyes off the way in which certain European intellectuals and politicians are continuing their campaign of Jew hatred by supporting Palestinian claims that Jerusalem was always a Muslim city and that the Zionist Jews are attempting to "Judaize" our holy city?