

# Castro as persecutor of gays

## REVIEW | MOVIE

**IMPROPER CONDUCT** - Documentary written and directed by Nester Almendros and Orlando Jimenez Leal, a French production, in Spanish and French with English subtitles, at the ICA Cinema at Copley Place, no rating.

By Michael Blowen  
Globe Staff

On the surface, "Improper Conduct" is a restrained, yet impassioned, response to Fidel Castro's

persecution of homosexuals. Yet, beyond the specific accounts of repression and torture of homosexuals, co-directors Nester Almendros and Orlando Jimenez Leal have captured the essence of militaristic regimes that, by definition, demand conformity.

According to the film, the new Cuban social order, built on male-dominated machismo and instigated by Castro, was based on ridding the nation of "antisocial elements." During this crusade, which began in 1960, homosexuals were grouped with prostitutes, drug dealers and corrupt

politicians as "products of a decadent capitalist society."

In 1965, Castro started UMAP [Military Units to Aid Production] camps for the "re-education" of dissidents. Many of the people forced into these camps were homosexual, and those who became exiles in Europe and the United States form the testimonial basis for "Improper Conduct."

Since the film's release in New York, critics have split down leftist/rightist lines. Those on the left, sensitive to any criticism of communist regimes, complained that Almendros and Leal are right-wingers intent on defaming Castro. Those on the right praise the documentary as a landmark film that begins to put communist persecution in perspective. "Improper Conduct" fits neither category.

Through interviews with Martha Frayde, Castro's former ambassador to UNESCO; dissident writers Reinaldo Arenas and Rene Ariza along with exiled hairdressers, transvestites and a tour guide, "Improper Conduct" becomes a chorus against political repression. Although the film does limit itself to Cuba, the implications are universal.

Although the filmmakers depend too much on personal testimony and the style of the movie is primarily "talking heads," it does raise compelling questions about the nature of militarism in any form.

As writer Rene Ariza says so eloquently toward the end of the film: "There are many Castros. We must restrain the Castro that's in all of us. It's a vicious circle. We're all trapped in paranoia. Everyone suspects everyone else."

Until this fundamental mistrust is resolved, concludes the filmmakers, then oppression and repression will continue to flourish.

## GOLDEN GLOBE NOMINEE FOR: BEST ACTRESS (Jessica Lange)



JESSICA LANGE  
is Jewell Ivy

SAM SHEPARD  
is Gil Ivy

# COUNTRY

PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED  
SOME MATERIAL MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN

**Starts Today**

ARLINGTON .....Capitol  
BROOKLINE.....Cinema  
LEXINGTON.....Sack  
NATICK .....Flicks

NEEDHAM.....Movies  
WALTHAM.....Cinema  
WELLESLEY .....Community  
W. ROXBURY .....Village

## GOLDEN GLOBE AWARD NOMINEE FOR: BEST PICTURE (Comedy) BEST ACTOR (Dudley Moore)

"MOORE HAS RARELY BEEN SO FUNNY.,  
'MICKI AND MAUDE' IS DOUBLY,  
DELIRIOUSLY FUNNY...  
YOU'LL GET SLAPHAPPY"

—Carrie Rickey, Boston Herald

"Hilarious, Dudley Moore's best film since 'Arthur'"

—Jeffrey Lyons, SNEAK PREVIEWS