

Executive Producer Ilya Claisse anticipates that the two-part television portrayal of **L'affaire Dominici (The Dominici Affair)** will spark fresh controversy about the infamous case of Gaston Dominici. In 1952, at 75 years of age, he was officially found guilty of the brutal murder of Sir Jack Drummond, his wife and daughter in the South of France.

In a bid to quell French public opinion as the story rapidly gripped the nation, a superficial inquiry was carried out and the elderly patriarch was given a death sentence in 1954. Eventually pardoned by

character reinforces the controversy of the whole business and underlines what an immense actor he is."

Levent, whose impressive 60 film career began as Assistant Cameraman on François Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups*, admits that visually interpreting an historically accurate and credible re-enactment with only 1950s black-and-white archive news images and an Orson Welles documentary on which to base his work was a considerable challenge.

"Gaston Dominici's face was weathered, his hands were calloused and he had earth under his nails, so I chose realism

The re-enactment of L'affaire Dominici



General de Gaulle in 1960, he died five years later at 88. Half a century on, doubts persist and the case has never been resolved. Dominici's grandson is optimistic that this faithful reconstruction based on investigative work by William Raymond will result in a re-opening of the case.

"Reviewing the trial was no easy matter," says Claisse "and we now know that whole sections of the inquiry were spent in silence or were distorted, even altered. Some of the evidence wasn't even taken into account."

At the request of Producer Christian Charret, French actor Michel Serrault agreed to take the lead role. Director of Photography Alain Levent recalls the moment when Serrault first arrived for costume and make-up tests in a velvet jacket with a scarf around his neck, a little hat on his head and a cane in his hand. "There was complete silence on set. I can tell you definitively that Michel Serrault is Gaston Dominici. He put so much subtle colour into the role and his cinematic interpretation came unbelievably close to the legendary figure. Although this is a drama, the 'lightness' Michel Serrault occasionally slips into his innermost

and selected contrasting images with Kodak Vision2 7218 because it preserves a soft, sensitive and non-aggressive quality in portraits and achieves a natural rendering of skin texture. Although *L'affaire Dominici* is a television film, we set out to achieve a cinematic look and, vitally, 7218 enabled me to maintain contrast throughout. Using it has become such a pleasure." Kodak Vision 250D 7246 was Levent's choice for exteriors. "When there was a little sunlight, I worked with oblique lighting or even straight back-lighting and deliberately shot in semi-darkness. Interpretation is my task and, with these two Kodak stocks, I was able to use comfortable apertures that allowed me a great depth of field," he explains. Sadi Boualam, his chief electrician for the past 15 years, obtained a prototype 700-watt lighting balloon, which gave a perfectly diffused light. "It really is the equipment of tomorrow," enthuses Levent. "We used the balloon in artificial light with an 85 frame and were able to move in front of it without creating a shadow."

Constraints were placed upon Levent's cinematic approach because Director Pierre Boutron (*Les années sandwich* and *Fiesta*) wanted to move as he worked

throughout the entire depth of the sets, without any spotlights on the ground. So the DP applied his considerable experience and, with two ARRIFlex SRIII cameras and Zeiss lenses, created remarkable framing and successfully captured the essence of the long-forgotten era. "I love working with directors who really express what they want and the remarkable Pierre Boutron is one; his productions have such charm and quality."

With the exception of the prison at Corneilles-en-Parisis, hotel shots at Meaux and court scenes at Rambouillet, much of the 47-day shoot took place in the South of France between Avignon and Digne-les-Bains.

L'affaire Dominici is a co-production of Gétéve, TF1 and the Swiss and Belgian television companies TSR and RTB. ■

Crew List

Producers: Christian Charret and Jacques Salles
 Executive Producer: Ilya Claisse
 Director: Pierre Boutron
 Director of Photography: Alain Levent

A Gétéve, TF1, TSR and RTB
 Co-Production

Left: Michel Serrault as Gaston Dominici.

Above: Bruno Slagmulder as Gustave Dominici (the son). Next to him is DP Alain Levent.