WHY IS A NEW FILM MAKING FRANCE LOOK AGAIN AT NAZI COLLABORATION?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A new French film called Notre Salut is attracting large audiences by showing how ordinary officials helped the Vichy regime during the Second World War. Vichy was the authoritarian government led by Marshal Philippe Pétain after France was defeated by Germany in 1940. It worked with the Nazis and helped send about 76,000 Jewish people from France to concentration camps. Instead of focusing only on famous leaders or resistance heroes, the film follows a minor administrator who deals with the paperwork and transport arrangements behind the deportations. The story was inspired by letters found by the director, Emmanuel Marre, which described the life of his great-grandfather, a Vichy official. The film has become popular while France is debating the growth of far-right politics. Many people are asking how ordinary citizens can become involved in an unfair or violent system without stopping to question what they are doing.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

This story shows that dictatorships do not work only because of powerful leaders. They also depend on officials, workers and ordinary people who carry out orders. It raises an uncomfortable question about responsibility: if someone says they were only following instructions, does that excuse their actions? The film also shows why countries continue to argue about their wartime past.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

“Why might ordinary officials help an unfair government?”

Source: The Guardian

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/oct/03/french-film-notre-salut-vichy-regime