



“The International” Banks on a Bit of Truth

Well-informed students of history and of the world of realpolitik recognize how near the truth the tag line is, but they don't expect to find many insights in films from Hollywood, broadly dedicated as it is to left-wing politics — plus being largely financed by the very establishment it so often claims to rebel against. There have been, of course, a few exceptional movies, such as *The Brotherhood of the Bell* with Glenn Ford.



The "they" in *The International's* tag line refers to globalist bankers. In real life, multinational mega-banks have been major factors in the world's chaos: funding wars and revolutions, unduly influencing acting governments, and generating misery via debt and inflation. Names that come to mind include the Rothschilds, who virtually turned monarchs into vassals while funding both sides of European conflicts; the Morgan interests, who birthed the Council on Foreign Relations — breeding ground of presidential cabinets; Kuhn, Loeb & Co., which supplied at least \$20 million for the success of the Russian Revolution; and the Rockefellers' Chase Manhattan Bank, which provided low-cost loans to the Soviets at the height of the Cold War.

Some viewers may therefore find interesting the newly released *The International*, which features as its arch-villain a Europe-based multinational bank called the International Bank of Business and Credit (IBBC). The story's chief protagonist is Interpol investigator Louis Salinger (British actor Clive Owen). Formerly a Scotland Yard inspector, he had tried to investigate the bank in that capacity, but left the Yard after powerful influences thwarted his work.

When the film opens, Salinger and his Interpol partner Thomas Schumer are on the verge of a new breakthrough: an IBBC official is ready to blow the whistle on the bank, which has been planning to purchase missile guidance systems from an Italian arms manufacturer. But when Schumer suddenly dies of a suspect "heart attack," and the official dies in a car accident, Salinger begins to realize the extent of the bank's sinister power.

Joining Salinger in his pursuit of IBBC is Manhattan Assistant District Attorney Eleanor Whitman (Naomi Watts), whose official interest in the bank began with its suspected links to organized crime.

An interesting conversation takes place when Salinger and Whitman meet Umberto Calvini, head of the



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Italian arms manufacturing firm, whose deal with IBBC has just gone sour. He explains that the bank is buying cheap weapons from China and trying to corner the market on the flow of small weapons into the Third World. However, its purpose in funding conflicts is not to control the outcome of those conflicts, but to *generate debt*. "The IBBC wants to control the debt," says Calvini. "And whoever controls the debt, controls everything." "This is the essence of the banking industry," he says, "to make us all slaves to debt."

Calvini's remarks have a strong ring of truth to those familiar with what G. Edward Griffin, in *The Creature from Jekyll Island*, calls "The Rothschild Formula": "the formula by which war is converted into debt and debt converted back into war." Indeed, in one scene, we see an IBBC executive offering to back African revolutionaries in a "national liberation movement." The bank promises them weapons and intelligence in return for future considerations.

Unfortunately, Calvini is assassinated before he can make further revelations, and when Salinger and Whitman make genuine progress toward solving the crime, they are officially compelled to leave Italy. Once again, IBBC's international power has shielded itself from investigation. However, with good detective work, the pair discover Calvini's assassin is en route to New York, where they pursue him.

Further revelations come when Salinger confronts Wilhelm Wexler, IBBC's aging handler for security and dirty operations. Wexler was a 30-year veteran of the Stasi — the former East German secret police — underscoring the ironic compatibility of communists with some capitalists. Wexler warns Salinger that any attempt to bring the bank to justice will fail because "everyone is involved." When Salinger asks for a clarification of "everyone," Wexler lists a number of governments — including that of the United States and its CIA. At this point, Salinger realizes he must fight the bank outside the system because the system is already rigged.

The movie's institutional villain, IBBC, is loosely based on a real bank, the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), which collapsed in scandal in 1991. Among other things, BCCI was found to be involved in money laundering, funding of terrorism, and arms trafficking (including nuclear technologies), very similar to the movie bank. In light of the current financial meltdown, we would have been happier had the film been based on even larger banking villains — such as the Federal Reserve, which has been responsible for nearly a century of inflation, debasing our currency and personal earnings, while giving the U.S. government "carte blanche" for spending. But *The International* works as a movie because the conspiracy it depicts within the banking world comes close enough to viewers' perceptions of reality to make the basic premise credible. It is, and that's enough for this reviewer to give it a thumbs up.

The International is tightly directed by Tom Tykwer, and while not every plot twist is easy to follow, the film proceeds more logically than some of today's thrillers, where desire for fast pacing often results only in a frenzied blur. Clive Owen delivers a gritty performance as Salinger, weary from the fight, but relentless in his pursuit of justice. The Australian Naomi Watts is credible as Assistant DA Whitman, though her role takes a back seat to Owen's. The bankers and their icy lawyers have a genuine "establishment" feel, and look like they'd be perfectly comfortable sipping cocktails with Alan Greenspan and David Rockefeller.

The International is buoyed by a suspenseful soundtrack and some standout photography, as it takes us to locations such as Berlin, Milan, New York, and Istanbul. There is also a memorable shoot-'em-up staged at a replica of the Guggenheim Museum — perhaps a throwback to Alfred Hitchcock's custom of staging action at famous landmarks.



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To be sure, *The International* is designed much more as entertainment than as a lesson in international realities; it will not appeal to everyone. It is rated "R" for occasional foul language and some bloody violence.

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