

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Historical

Rear-Admiral Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux (played by the same actor portraying Brownie)

And several of his fellow officers, crew and so on.

The French Politicians

Georges d'Anvire-Egret (President)

Terence Orgivie (PM and leader of the Legion of France party, which is in a coalition government with the Parti d'Accord (PDA))

Louis-France Belmont & Ignace Lorimal (LOF)

Jean-Marc Trubille (deputy PM and leader of the PDA)

Paul Gambonet and Lance Yves Quinne (PDA)

The de Chaumont Party**Colonel Claude de Chaumont**

The Colonel is tall (around 6'4") and bears himself in a haughty, soldierly way. This is exacerbated by his aquiline nose.

He has a humorous side, but is generally coolly sophisticated EXCEPT when he is making a passionate speech. In that case he gesticulates with a flourish.

De Chaumont's English assistant Major Grahame Glover

An uncomplicated man who tends to enjoy the company of others. He also enjoys his quotes from Hamlet.

Jeff Challon (an Australian civil servant seconded to the Major).

A straight-talking taciturn man with little bearing on the plot progression.

Grace Cobey

A lovely young woman who has been caring for her invalid father since a teenager. There is a wit and warmth about Grace which is quickly appreciated by Major Glover.

The Australians

Gil Cobey: an invalid cared for by his daughter Grace.

Grace Cobey (daughter of Gil and his late wife Esme, and sister of Alex and Michael)

Alex Cobey: 19 years old, born in 1913.

Full name Alexander Peter Cobey.

An undergraduate at the Sydney University in the Engineering Faculty.

Alex is hot-headed, adventurous and gung-ho.

Alex's three companions:

- Ernie McIllwraith: 19 years old.

Full name Ernest Jamison McIllwraith. Studying Law at the University. Ernie is a worrier.

- "Droop" Strudwick: 20 years old (born 1912).

Full name Sydney Strudwick.

His father died fighting at Gallipoli in WWI. Droop was brought-up by a kindly, fussy aunt. Droop is usually smoking a roll-your-own and often the butt sags from the corner of his mouth.

He studies Engineering with Alex.

- **Barry Clive-Dent:** 19 years old.

Like Ernie, he is studying Law at the University. He is the cleverest of the group.

Michael Cobey is a tutor in the Arts Faculty at the Sydney University.

Finn and Glenys Cobey: wealthy retirees. Gil is Finn's brother.

Catherine, Polly and James: are the children of Finn and Glenys.

James is a musician (percussion, snare drum) with the National Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra.

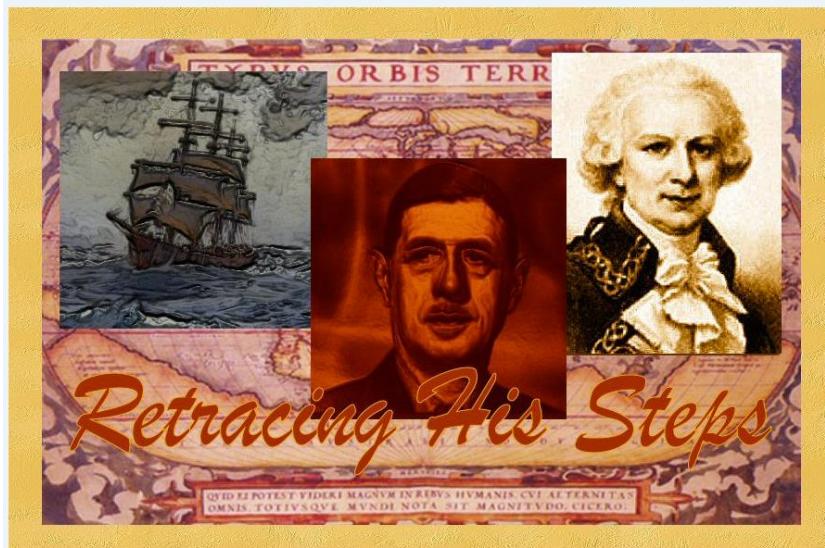
Catherine is heavily involved in good works.

Lloyd Wetherby: married to Polly and works in the city.

And **Brownie** (played by the same actor playing Bruni).

This will be an acting challenge, as Brownie is a knock-about old Australian whereas Bruni is a Rear Admiral of the French Navy.

There are many other minor characters: the telegram clerk, railway employees, hotel staff and the cricketers.



RETRACING HIS STEPS

Special Notes

The Threads of "Retracing His Steps"

The French politicians take us on a scary trip: Paris erupted in anarchy in the 1930's with Prime Ministers dropping like flies. This provided a brilliant chance for some drama. We juxtapose the bandages of Bruni (dying of scurvy) with those of Trubille (dying of rifle shots sustained courtesy of Gambonet's machinations).

There are some oblique references which try to tie-in the last days of King Louis XVI with Bruni and then with the French politicians.

Has Colonel Claude de Chaumont voyaged to Australia to contemplate his future in the wilderness? To discover a historical artefact (to wit, a letter)? To solve the mystery of the missing French explorer La Pérouse? Or all three? That's something for the audience to decide.

The low-key romance between Major Glover and Grace Cobey provides light-hearted humour, as the pair bounce quotes from Hamlet off each other. The Hamlet reference is in the name of the play ("The King's Conscience") which sparks off a series of events of major political significance in France.

In the background of all the action is the constantly-recurring theme of Ravel's music, especially the drumbeat of the Bolero. James (Grace's cousin) is playing the snare drum, de Chaumont met him and is described as "marching to his own drum", de Chaumont looks out over the Indian Ocean to one of Ravel's melodies.

The four young men on holidays (aka swot vac) have nothing to do with anybody else UNTIL the very end of the film, when they finally bring the pieces together by means of their acquaintance, Brownie. And Brownie will be played by the same actor who plays Bruni.

Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux is the narrator. Imagine that you were reading a biography and the actual subject of the biography (dead for over 200 years) talked to you as you read. This is the relationship between Bruni and his "Landlubber" friend (that is, the Colonel). Bruni empathizes with de Chaumont: the one being an Army man and the other Navy.

Both men are retracing the steps of French explorer La Pérouse.

Colonel Claude de Chaumont's Broadcast

I felt that the French politicians were adequately conveying the dire situation in Paris in the early 1930's. To enunciate the Colonel's broadcast would have been of no assistance to our understanding of the various threads in the plot.

Probably (given the passing of time) the most interesting aspects of Colonel de Chaumont's speeches were the frantic gestures and rants which accompanied his many speeches.

So the decision was made to drop the "matter" of the broadcast; we watch some of it through sound-proofed windows.

The Play: The King's Conscience

ACT II, scene vi

It doesn't really matter what this root-and-branch play consists of. It is a means to precipitate Orgivie's dramatic reaction to the play's subject matter.

When the foreground action (the French politicians shouting at each other behind the theatre boxes) lags, we (the film audience) will be able to hear and maybe see what is going on on the stage.

The play represents a rehash of the Tobolic Affair.

The following action takes place on stage and may (or may not) be picked-up by our camera (depending on where our political characters are located). However, there will be some audible reminders of the play's progression, even during the noise of the action in the foyer.

- A tortured man is having a mental attack as he wobbles back and forth in his hotel room having a complete meltdown. He yabbers on frenetically.

- Police car lights reflect at his hotel window. The man screams and is then shot: he falls dramatically to the floor.
- Armed police (a SWAT team) burst into the hotel room and dispose of the body exactly as suggested by Orgivie in ACT I, scene vi.
- The armed police disappear.
- Media people swarm into the room and begin to scribble into shorthand notebooks and take photos with flash cameras (old-fashioned).
- A large contingent of Press people fire difficult questions at the solemn politicians (as they squirm uncomfortably).
- Then the action becomes balletic and surreal as the consciences of the politicians are flogged by devils and imps.

Yes, it's pretty shocking. However as long as the stagey bits are coherent and look "real", then nobody is going to care. Hopefully, the foreground action will be so enthralling that the play will be glossed-over.