

Land and Freedom portrays politics of Spanish Civil War

Kristi McKim
features editor

"Ideas are the basis of us. Unless we win the war, there's no point in having ideology," states David, a young Englishman, in the film *Land and Freedom* (1995, United Kingdom). Defending one's ideologies and right to formulate ideas is the primary conflict depicted in this film. The war to which David refers is the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s—a political struggle of Spanish peasants against the pressures of a growing fascist European continent.

Screened in Reed Lecture Hall Monday, November 10, *Land and Freedom* is the final film of the Fall Foreign Film Series at Penn State Behrend. Winner of the Felix Award for Best European Film and the International Critics' Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, this film presents a focused humanistic portrait of the larger spread of fascism across Europe.

By focusing on the effects of social unrest and war upon a few characters, director Ken Loach captures the comradeship and emotional relationships which are bolstered and/or disrupted by political upheaval.

The issue of land collectivization is debated in a particularly important scene of a community meet-

ing; the people practice their democratic rights by voting to collectivize the land. Thus, capitalism and private ownership develop into communism and collectivization—primarily by means of the people's democratic choice. In this way, the film suggests an alternative to the free market economy, as it upholds the necessity for shared ownership and communistic ideals.

The audience is reminded of the key role of the land in this film, as extensive scenes of the landscape's rolling hills and rich green meadows affirm the splendor of land—and its centrality to the issues addressed within the film. The land figures as a primary character, as even the film's title, *Land and Free-*

out establishing the English man as the center of the film.

The Englishman, David (Ian Hart), serves as the settler, leader, and mediator who interferes with and attempts to assimilate into this collectivized, international militia. In scenes where the Spanish, Irish, Scottish, French, Italian, and American soldiers debate the political tactics for their joint affiliation, David is portrayed as the only character who can bring the people to act rationally and cooperatively. Because of this, the film seems to suggest a centrality of the English culture, within a narrative which seems originally intended to illustrate the importance of the Spanish people's freedom and autonomy.

In order for the film to affirm the Spaniards' own pursuit of freedom, though, it should not include an Englishman as its primary character.

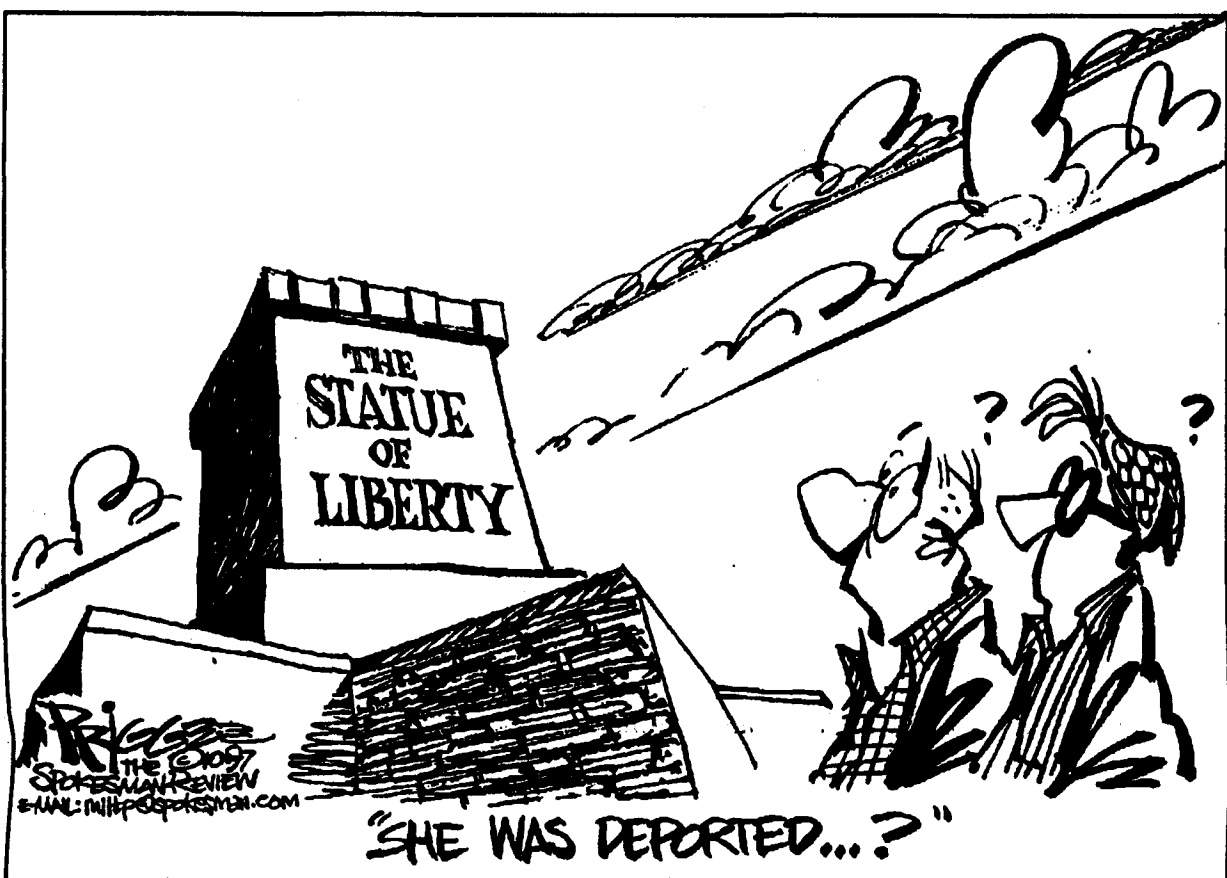
Beyond these problems of ethnocentricity, the film provides an insight, however "Anglicized," into an important event of global history. By emphasizing the sources of conflict (via debate and dialogue) rather than the actual bloody battle scenes, the film becomes a political document in itself—it affirms one's freedom to pursue humanistic concerns regardless of consequence.

director Ken Loach captures the comradeship and emotional relationships which are bolstered and/or disrupted by political upheaval.

calendar notices behrcoll3@aol.com



Leo, played by Bond Davis, gets support from his friends, left to right, Bo (Joe Getway), Heather (Amanda Pieper), Eddie (Michael Lechner), and Miriam (Jennifer Quadri) in *Only You*, a comedy playing in the Studio Theatre. Performances are November 13, 14, and 15 at 8 p.m. and November 16 at 2:30 p.m. For reservations or more information, please call 898-6016.



THE REASONS TO EXPERIENCE
PEEK 'N PEAK KEEP PILING UP ❄️ ❄️ ❄️

SHAPED SKIING
CROSS COUNTRY SKIING
TRADITIONAL SKIING
NEW THIS SEASON TUBING

SNOW SHOES
SNOW SKATING
SNOW BOARDING

FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Peek'n Peak
RESORT & CONFERENCE CENTER
1405 Olde Road • Clymer, NY 14724
Ph. (716) 353-4141 • Fax (716) 353-4542
email pk-n-ph@travelbase.com
http://www.pknpk.com