

Mel Brooks attacks Germany with laughs in comedy flick

By RON SKLAR
Collegian Staff Writer

You may or may not have seen the original 1942 version of "To Be Or Not To Be," but rest assured that the 1984 version stands up on its own marvelously.

This wild comedy about a group of thespians who have a run-in with the Nazis during the 1939 takeover of Poland is still funny. The "funny," however, is more of a series of chuckles rather than a hysterical laugh riot, and that's because the situation is extremely dated. But, "To Be Or Not To Be" is worth seeing, just for the chuckles. Jack Benny played the original role of the actor gets to test his acting ability when he is forced to impersonate certain members of the Nazi Party (including You-Know-Who Himself) in order to thwart the Nazis' evil plans to destroy the Polish underground. Jack Benny was certainly Jack Benny, but Mel Brooks is none other than Mel Brooks.

It's Mel who gets to play Bronski in this

version, and he is zany and dizzy as one might expect. But, this is not the Mel we remember from "High Anxiety" or "History of the World." Mel has a script to read here and an intricate twisting plot to follow, and though he is still funny, he must behave. Mel's fans won't be disappointed; in fact, they'll delight in seeing him play Bronski, the vain, hokoy actor who can razzle-dazzle 'em with Shakespeare and vaudeville, all for the price of an admission ticket.

Anne Bancroft is also on hand as the flirty but intelligent singer-dancer-actress Ana Bronski (Brooks' wife both on and off the screen). She is as sexy and as intriguing and as talented as the Graduate, and she doesn't look a day older. In this film she is wooing another young man, a fighter pilot played by Tim Matheson. You may remember him as the good guy in "Animal House."

Carole Lombard had the original role, but Bancroft gives it her own brand of warmth and dimension. Her character is that scheming siren

with the heart of gold who was so plentiful during Hollywood's Golden Age. She has brutal Nazis pleading and crying at her feet with the wink of her eye and a delicate air kiss.

The film has the silk-stocking aura of an old movie, save that it is in color, but of course some changes have been made for the 80s. Unlike the 1942 version, we get a feeling of doom for the Polish people, who are about to lose control of their homeland, and for the Polish Jews, who would be taken from their homeland forever. It is a chilling reality in a light, funny film. Another novelty here is the use of a homosexual character who is forced to wear a pink triangle and is eventually arrested.

The only tiring aspect of the film is the concept of the "bumbling yet lovable Nazi" who was portrayed as a nausium in such comedies as "Hoogan's Heroes." The idea of the mindless, goofy Gestapo officer who is "only following orders" is stale. Charles Durning tries his best, though, as the "chubby, lovable" head of the Gestapo.



Mel Brooks sets out to disrupt Germany in "To Be or Not to Be."

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YOUR ARM?
I FELL DOWN IN
THE COFFEE SHOP!

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HELLO? COUNTY CLERK?
YES, THE GUY I COOP ON?
SON HERE WHO CLAIMS
TO BE GONNLY NAWRED.
YES... AS I UNDERSTAND
IT, HE WIS "BROOKS-DONKINS"
RIGHT, "BROOKS-DONKINS"
MUN?... WELL, TUE, HSK
DUN...
WHAT'D YA
BREAK?
MY HEAD.
HIS HEAD GOT ANY
NEW OWNS?
WELL, HERE WE ARE
TWO DAYS AFTER THE
PRESIDENT'S BIRTHDAY.
... AND IN WHAT DO YOU
KNOW, THE CELEBRATIONS
STILL GOING ON...
... GUESS THEY HAD A LITTLE
TROUBLE TIPPING ALL THE CANDLES ON
JUST ONE CAKE!

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WELL, HERE WE ARE
TWO DAYS AFTER THE
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... AND IN WHAT DO YOU
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STILL GOING ON...
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42 Wise bird
44 Reprimand
45 Coal tree
47 John
48 Used in cheap jewelry
50 Shield
51 Fine
52 Utopias
Down
1 Ricochet
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THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION
February 11, 1984 marks the fifth anniversary of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. For five years, the Islamic Republic has defied all the predictions of the doomsters. Friends and foes alike, all attest to the fact that the Islamic Republic has washed a number of tumultuous upheavals, any one of which would have brought an immediate collapse to other regional governments. Undoubtedly, the success of the Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic has been an unprecedented contemporary phenomenon, challenging all accepted norms adopted by either the West or the East and setting in motion the wheels of Islamic revivalism throughout the Middle East, and for that matter, the entire Muslim world.
Inspired by a strong belief in Islam, the Islamic Revolution was an intrinsic response to decades of anguish and misery under the reign of the ex-shah, whose devastating policies ruined the socio-economic basis of an entire nation. Corruption, vulgarity and repression were all characteristics of this unwanted regime, which for long had the support and blessing of successive U.S. administrations. No oppressive regime can contain forever the will of a nation to set itself free and, of course, that of the ex-shah was no exception. It thus took a ready nation, willing to offer any sacrifice, together with decisive leadership, to put an end to 50 years of dark tyranny which was perceived by those who so eagerly sustained it as an unshakable regime on an "island of stability."
Soon after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, newly instituted revolutionary organizations embarked upon an intensive social program to fulfill the needs of millions of deprived people. In less than five years, water supply facilities and pipelines have been constructed in about 6,000 villages, and about 8,500 villages have been supplied with electricity (whereas only 4,000 were given electricity during the entire reign of the ex-shah's regime). During the same period, extensive housing projects were begun to provide shelter to thousands of families.
Education and combating illiteracy have received equal attention. About 4.8 million people have participated in literacy campaign classes, with an estimated 1.5 million to participate in the coming year (March 1984 - March 1985). No less than 3,500 schools, more than what the past regime built during its entire reign, have been built throughout the country. The government has also allocated sufficient funds for the construction of an additional 1,300 schools and 35 technical and agricultural institutes in the coming year.
After closing briefly to restructure and reorganize curricula in all disciplines, the universities have reopened, offering undergraduate studies to more than 146,000 students.
Aside from the government's commitment to the betterment of the social welfare, freedom of expression and the rights of minorities have been restored. Imam Khomeini's speech in January of last year marked the beginning of a new, stable era. "From now on," stated the Imam, "we are in a period of stability and construction; the nation must find peace, security, and continue to work without worry." Although a few, whose opinions are widely reported by the Western press, still blame the government for a perceived lack of freedom, the mere fact that they are able to criticize the government openly proves the contrary. Moreover, the continued support expressed by minority leaders - Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians - for the government and the latter's willingness to secure their rights are undeniably realities that negate fabricated "reports" of the Western media. As for the illegal Bahai cult, its members are free to practice individually, so long as they do not disturb the society.
In a desperate world economy, the remnants of Iran's ravaged pre-revolution economy have been restored. With a hopeful and promising economic outlook. Of about \$10 billion in foreign debts, almost all are repaid. With no outstanding debt and a rise in foreign reserves from a low of \$1 billion to about \$10 billion, Iran is perceived by some experts as the Middle East's next booming economy. In spite of an unwanted war which continues to consume 30% of the budget, the government's ability to reduce inflation by half to 20%, is well indicative of the shrewdness of the present policy-makers. If an increase in gross national product is any indication, a 5.6% growth rate in the GNP confirms that economic recovery is indeed underway.
With agriculture getting top priority, the government is committed to making Iran self-sufficient in food by the late 1990's through distribution of land and greater use of agricultural machinery and chemical fertilizers. A total of \$1.31 billion is to be spent on 963 agricultural schemes in the next five years. The Supreme Agricultural Council, which was established recently, has been charged with the task of studying the problems of water, soil and agricultural machinery and coordinating executive policies.
Industry has by no means been neglected. In fact, a growth of 5.5% in the employment index of large industries during March 1982 - March 1983 accompanied a 15.6% increase in large industries production during the first six months of the same year. Furthermore, due to the government's serious attention to solving the acute problems of heavy industry, output increased 80% during the first half of 1982 (March 1982 - March 1984).
Although the problems of inflation and the high costs of certain items have not been fully resolved, the government was all of the Islamic Republic is continuing to devise and implement methods of tackling these matters. However, faced with an unwanted costly war and concerned with other countries, such as Iraq with an outstanding foreign debt of about \$35 billion or Israel, with its more than 190% inflation, the government's performance thus far has been remarkable indeed, and it manifests one fact: That, unlike the Western media's smokescreens, the officials of the Islamic Republic are shrewder, abler and far more devoted than any of the other regional governments.
Politically, the Islamic Republic is more stable than ever. Coup attempts, ethnic troubles, economic sanctions, assassination campaigns and a full-scale war have all, astoundingly, strengthened the country. What was hoped to be a quick victory for Saddam Hussein turned into a quagmire for him and his Western supporters. Over French aid to Iraq has multiplied and cover U.S. support for Iraq was publicized by Reagan's special envoy to the Middle East. However, none of this has changed the prospect of a humiliating Iraqi defeat.
Having realized that the foundations of the present system are unshakable, the West embarked upon a massive and coordinated misinformation campaign designed to discredit Iran with a final objective of preparing the ground for a potential military strike against the Islamic Republic. Wherever a bomb explodes, the West blames it on Iran, yet all the sophisticated intelligence agencies of the West cannot produce even the weakest of documents to support its claim. As a commentator stated in the Los Angeles Times, "The policy of attributing recent bombings to Tehran - or to any outside force - is a way to resist dealing with the fact that the perpetrators, far from being puppets, have good reasons of their own for attacking the United States. . . Many people in the Middle East regard the U.S. as the supporter of illegitimate forces - chiefly Israel and the Phalange government of Amen Janayel. The U.S.'s claims of peace-keeping while actively helping a hated faction only aggravates their antipathy. As for the Americans, they should realize that the spread of misinformation is a classic method of destabilization, with 25% of the CIA budget devoted to it. One recent example was the widespread reports of a Libyan hit squad which allegedly attempted to assassinate Reagan. Months later it was discovered that no such squad existed and that the issue was created only to divert public attention from the administration's plans to send "assassin to Libya to do away with Qaddafi" as reported by Jack Anderson. The connection between Iran and recent bombings, likewise, is as credible as Reagan's statement that "80% of our air pollution" is caused by Iran.
The Islamic Republic has withstood a series of destabilizing plots and misinformation campaigns for five years now and, with the help of God Almighty, will do so in the years to come. Sooner or later, the West and the East have to discover its sublime ideas and learn to respect them, if not fully accept them. Until then, both should realize that God helps those who advance his cause.
"Oh you who believe! If you help the cause of God, He will help you and make firm your feet."
Qur'an 47:7
Muslim Students' Association (Persian Speaking Group)