

ing with the satellite German government on equal terms, and an equally understandable fear that talks with it might be the first step in the Bolshevization of all Germany. It would be foolhardy, however, for western statesmen to assume that this resistance can be regarded as permanent. Molotov's arguments were certainly not without effect in West Germany; and people who believe that western tactics make reunification impossible are apt to argue that it is time the Germans acted for themselves, even if they have to run risks in doing so.

Moreover, if the West Germans remain stubborn about negotiating with East Germany, the Soviet Union can always fall back on the kind of bilateral negotiations between Bonn and Moscow that the Free Democrats and the Socialists seem to want.

Their present attitude may, indeed, be nothing but a ruse designed to strengthen the desire in West Germany for such talks and to create a favorable atmosphere in which they can come forward with a new and irresistible offer that in the end would give them the kind of neutral Germany they proposed at Geneva and Prague. After all, as Jens Daniel said in *Der Spiegel* last month, the Soviets may be much less interested in the prospect of Bolshevizing Germany than they are in destroying NATO. If so, "They would roll over us more effectively with an offer that surprised us by its reasonableness than they could with tanks."

IN VIEW of all this and in the light of the sudden decline of Adenauer's fortunes, the planners at SHAPE would be well advised not to take too much comfort from the ceremony at Andernach and not to count too heavily on the twelve divisions the Germans have promised to enter in NATO's order of battle.

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VIEWS & REVIEWS

MOVIES: King, Clown, Maniac, and Monk

ROBERT BINGHAM

THERE IS at least one major drawback to the commercial benevolence that brought Sir Laurence Olivier's splendid film of *Richard III* to the nation's TV screens the same day it opened to the general public in a theater. True, the General Motors people paid for enough TV time to allow the long picture to run full length without cuts. True also, it was seen by a lot of people around

best in an old-fashioned movie house, especially with Technicolor and VistaVision. If you missed Olivier's "Richard III" on television, take heart.

THE ABUNDANCE of titled talent in the cast is almost oppressive. Like the prodigal Casey Stengel, Olivier's line-up is full of players who would probably be batting in the clean-up spot on any other team. Sir John Gielgud and Sir Cedric Hardwicke pass almost unnoticed in minor roles. Pamela Brown, who is capable of showing an audience some fine acting, shows almost nothing but her décolletage as the obliging Jane Shore.

One should give full honors, however, to Claire Bloom, who makes Lady Anne's passion for the man she hates as convincing as anyone could, and to Sir Ralph Richardson, who as Buckingham picks up the action just as it is beginning to bog down a little near the two-hour mark and sends it briskly on its way to the finale before he meets his ironic end. Sir Ralph may very well be the finest actor in Britain today. He might even have made a better Richard than Olivier.

Perhaps that is an unnecessarily unkind remark to make in the presence of Sir Laurence's powerful performance as star, producer, and director. But since the play belongs almost entirely to Richard, Olivier must accept whatever quibbles there may be about its success along with the great credit that is undoubtedly due him. To put it bluntly, Olivier plays his part for laughs during the first hour or so and then looks a little foolish at the end when he tries to arouse pity for a hero's downfall. The suavely satanic asides



the country who might otherwise never have had the chance. The trouble is that a lot of other people who might have put on their hats and coats and gone out to see it on a bigger screen will not bother to do so now, more's the pity. The color and costuming, the Renaissance pageantry of the production, by far its strongest points, must have been stunted beyond recognition for even those who are fortunate enough to possess color sets, and of course these qualities scarcely came through at all in black and white. There are some things that can still be done



—voice breaking and eye rolling—are indeed funny and may even be good theater in the short run. But in getting those easy laughs early, he throws away something that he needs badly later on, the self-destroying malevolence that could give tragic meaning to his death.

Of course the difficulties in the characterization of Richard lie in large measure with the man who wrote the play, by no means his best, and Olivier is not to be scolded too hard for giving the part a shape he felt he could handle. As he did with “Henry V,” he has created a pageant for the eye and the ear. The plot of “Richard” doesn’t lend itself to this treatment quite so easily, but again the pageant is magnificent.

Defending Danny

Three first-rate comedies are currently going the rounds—an American, a British, and a French one—that would surely provide a wealth of data for any acute social scientist who happened to be working up a theory on what makes a nation’s sense of humor unique. Stay in your seats; it is done already! What follows is a clinical record of the precise metabolic and emotive reactions of one endomorphic male sample (born in Lima, Ohio, of untainted parents) who volunteered to expose himself to the pictures in a controlled experiment. It’s all simply a question of what part of you the laughter begins in, our analysis concludes.

At the American picture, Paramount’s “The Court Jester” with Danny Kaye, he laughed out loud and hard twenty-three times, the impetus proceeding, according to the written protocol he has presented, from the viscera and spreading upwards through and beyond the solar plexus contagiously. It may be significant that when our volunteer tries to explain what made him laugh, it doesn’t sound very funny at all except to those who have

watched Mr. Kaye perform in the past and are really laughing at their own recollections. (Illustration: “He’s going to do this Spanish dance, see—you know, like flamenco—and he stands there real straight for a long time with his heels together telling about this dance he’s going to do and making sad Spanish faces over the guitar music, and then he lifts up his foot the way they do and brings it down bang! like that and then he screams ‘Owwwwwww!’ and goes limping around the place like he’s broken three toes.” Subject seized by convulsions.)

MR. KAYE is a clown—and a great one—rather than a comedian. That is to say, he traffics in sheer nonsense rather than in the building



up of amusing situations that move inevitably toward some sort of dramatic climax. The whole story of “The Court Jester” is absurd, a wildly improbable distortion of the medieval romance, complete with a delightfully ineffectual wicked king (Cecil Parker), assorted wicked nobleman (headed by Basil Rathbone), an absent-minded witch (Mildred Natwick), a colossally beefy opponent for Mr. Kaye at the jousting tournament whose full name apparently is the Grim and Gruesome Sir Griswold (Robert Middleton), and a fair lady alternately in and out of distress (Glynis Johns). Our volunteer wants it to be noted that Miss Johns’s voice is winsomely corrupt like that of a sleepy barmaid. He says there’s a swell part where

she tells the wicked old king she doesn’t mind letting him kiss her because she’s pretty sure the scourge that killed all the other members of her family probably isn’t catching anyway.

Admiring Alec

At the British movie, “The Lady-killers,” the volunteer laughed more often but not so hard, and he says that during some of the parts that seem funniest to him as he looks back on them he didn’t laugh at all but just smiled and felt good. When he did laugh, the attack began in his nose or throat and spread only a few times as far south as his rib cage. In this case when he describes what he saw, his listeners readily agree that it’s funny. The picture is all about a gang of bank robbers who masquerade as a string quintet in a lodginghouse run by a sweet little old lady while they are bringing off what is surely one of the most consummately planned heists of the century. It all comes to naught, of course, because of their virtuous den mother.

Our observer claims that the star billing given to Alec Guinness, risible though he is, serves mainly as a shill to get the customers past the box office so they can enjoy the real star, Katie Johnson, a sweet little old lady of seventy-seven who makes everything the crooks do seem terribly funny, just by being a sweet little old lady of seventy-seven. Of course he liked Guinness, genteelly maniacal as the gang’s leader, and he also singled out for praise the above-mentioned Cecil Parker, appearing in this one as an elegant spiv who calls himself simply the Major, and Danny Green as a softhearted thug known as One-Round. There was



also a parrot who rejoiced in the name of General Gordon, and two other birds whose names our endomorph didn't catch. But most of all he liked the old lady.

From all this emerges a hypothesis that witty situations and dialogue are the British forte, as opposed to gigantism, tall tales, and nonsense. The audience does most of its laughing after the joke is all over as the full realization of what has happened sinks in.

Pagnol in Provence

The French film, Marcel Pagnol's "Letters from My Windmill," brought tears to our subject's eyes nearly as often as it brought a chuckle to his lips. Moreover, he feels constrained in all honor to confess that he sometimes catches himself letting out a rather ostentatious snigger at French movies in hopes of making the people around him believe that he got it before the English subtitle came on, even when he didn't understand a word of the punch line. (It's the same *arriviste* urge that usually makes him say *shhh!* a little louder than anyone else when some poor fool applauds between movements at a concert.)

M. Pagnol has put together three Alphonse Daudet stories about the stubborn and lovable people of Provence. They aren't quite so stubborn or quite so lovable as the people who appeared in M. Pagnol's "César" trilogy, his "Baker's Wife," and his "Well-Digger's Daughter," and there certainly aren't any actors in it who could lay a glove on Raimu. But the goods are solidly put together and have worn well—canny priests, proud peasants, and straightforward joy in the pleasures of the flesh and the beauties of the land. The most diverting of the three episodes concerns the spiritual trials of a devout lay brother in a poverty-stricken monastery who finds that he is able to supervise the manufacture of a lucrative liqueur only by tasting the product liberally.

Humor, in the old meaning of the word, which had to do with the basic fluids and juices in human beings that make them behave the way they do—that's what hits a Frenchman where he lives. And the Pagnol film is richly full of humor.



CHANNELS:

Clearings in the Forest

MARYA MANNES

AFTER SEEING the second part of the "Constitution" trilogy on the CBS "Omnibus," three adults sighed as one: "I wish I had been taught that way." We were informed; we were stimulated; we were grateful. This time the TV Workshop of the Ford Foundation came through with a major contribution both to television and the expansion of the American mind, due in part to its choice of Boston lawyer Joseph N. Welch as master, not of ceremonies, but of sensibility. As those who saw him in the Army-McCarthy hearings know, he is a gifted and memorable actor. His face, so flexible, so civilized, can range in moments from dismay to

benevolence, from amazement to chagrin. The only trouble with *that* performance two years ago was an intrusion of reality so deeply shocking to the man Welch that the actor Welch was crushed into passivity. You cannot mug with a monster.

But here on "Omnibus," with the high mandate to bring alive the Constitution of the United States, with the distinguished editing of the historian Richard Hofstadter, excellent actors, and superbly intelligent direction, Welch was a happy man doing what he liked best. No matter if the teleprompter lost him for a moment or so or if the transition from his words to those of the statesmen-ghosts were not always smooth; the Boston lawyer would merely share his fleeting bewilderment with a raised eyebrow and a confiding smile and proceed with his job: to explain how the Constitution evolved, whom it involved, what happened next, and why; to lead into living scenes where men of the past moved into range speaking the words they spoke or wrote at that young time of our history.

The three parts of this "Omnibus" series, presented on alternate Sundays beginning February 5, were called "One Nation," "One Nation Indivisible," and "With Liberty and Justice for All": the key words of the pledge of allegiance. Aside from the refreshment of memory this series has given us—memory of great words and brave acts, of wisdom under fire and wisdom prevailing to our lasting good—I think it has served three major purposes. The first was to show that the sovereignty of the United States could never have been achieved without

