



FILM: **BYE, BYE GERMANY**

FDG RATING: 3.8 ☺☺☺☺○

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Sam Garbarski: *director/co-writer*
Moritz Bleibtreu: *actor: David Bermann*

DATE: November 21, 2021

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **BYE, BYE GERMANY**

Bye, Bye Germany offers a thought provoking perspective of 1946 post war Germany as people start their lives over again. It has a welcome sprinkle of humor which is unexpected in a film that is reflective about what happened during the war and shows the difficulty of post war life. David Bermann, whose family owned an elegant linen department store in Frankfurt, is determined to make the most of the ravaged postwar era by recruiting some friends from a displaced persons camp to sell linens at inflated prices to unsuspecting Germans. Most of the group have a simple motivation: to raise the money necessary to leave Germany behind and move on to the United States. The six friends are a band of quirky characters exercising amusing ruses to convince German women that they are getting an unbelievable bargain on the French linens. As we get to know each of the men, we are given a glimpse into the horrors experienced by each through short personal reflections.

A parallel story line is David's effort to get his citizenship paperwork approved by authorities. During the war, the Nazis trashed the family's elegant store, being a Jewish owned business, and he and his brothers were eventually taken prisoner. Now he's having difficulty getting his citizenship paperwork approved as an attractive, no-nonsense female investigator, who works for the Allies, suspects him of having collaborated with the Nazis and grills him about his activities in the camp, demanding to know why he received preferential treatment. In flashbacks, we see how David's penchant for telling jokes to prison guards was how he survived and even lead to Prison camp commander Otte being so impressed that he assigns him to a special mission. He is to coach Hitler in telling jokes. It seems that the Fuhrer is a bit humor challenged while Mussolini is quite the joke teller. But David is also a convincing story teller so we can't be sure that everything he relates is actually what happened.

We enjoyed the camaraderie of the six friends and the insight into how each survived the Holocaust. One of the men was an actor who spent years hiding in a prop coffin under a stage in a theater. As a band of salesmen, their creative sales techniques added a welcome comedic element.

One discussion participant commented on the wonderful jaunty/melancholic klezmer-style music. We all noted the stunning cinematography and detailed period costumes. Another participant enjoyed the balance of humor and pathos.

Garbarski's aim was to convey how the survivors felt, "how horrible it had been for each of them, then having hope and starting over again. I wanted to show the strength of Ashkenazi Jews, their humor and the self-irony that gave them the strength to survive," he said.

Post war Germany is not a period that is commonly covered in films so this unusual perspective was enlightening: After surviving the Holocaust, how to begin again, survive and hopefully thrive post Holocaust? We almost unanimously enjoyed the film resulting in an enduring 3.8 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!

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