

Charlie Wilson's War" Review

Mike Nichols' 2007 movie "Charlie Wilson's War" aroused multiple reactions from critics and received numerous reviews from the cineastes around the world. This motion picture reveals interesting events related to the Afghanistan War that were previously ignored by the media, and out of public's sight. Nichols' screenplay and remarkable play of Tom Hanks, Philip Hoffman, and Julia Roberts filled this story with a bright humor and marked it out from the mass of boring documentaries abundant with dry facts. This movie is easy to watch, despite its reference to serious topics. I would like to focus on some specific aspects of "Charlie Wilson's War" in order to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of this film.

The story of the film focuses on the U.S. congressional representative from Texas (played by Tom Hanks) who passionately desires to take communists out of Afghanistan and support the Afghan freedom fighters. The picture puts Charlie Wilson's personality in the center of the story, describing him as a straightforward fellow who enjoys drinking and knows how to have fun. Wilson firmly believes in having a good time and does not hide his habits from the public. This kind of straightness and openness makes him very popular among the Americans. People like the fact that they have this kind of real man who is "just like them" as their representative in congress. Charlie Wilson has the power to lead the people, and he feels it. However, he finds that his previous work as a congressional representative was not meaningful and considerable enough to make a difference. Wilson decides to stop partying and do something really important for the United States. This desire leads him to the development of the plan for the banishment of the Russian occupants from Afghanistan.

On his way to this goal, Charlie Wilson meets Houston socialite Joanne Herring (played by Julia Roberts) who becomes his major conservative supporter. Herring hates

Communists and wants them out of Afghanistan as much as Wilson does. She suggests that Afghans need weapons to fight the Russians and offers a tangled scheme of conveying guns to Afghanistan. This is when the viewer is introduced to the outset of their plan. Joanne Herring turns to her friend General Zia who introduces Charlie Wilson to the CIA officer, Gust Avrakotos (Philip Seymour Hoffman). Avrakotos finds the Israeli for Wilson and Herring who might supply the Afghan fighters with weapons for investment from the U.S. in exchange. Therefore, the next step for Charlie Wilson is finding the money. Wilson manages to increase the investment of Afghanistan freedom fighters from \$5 million to \$5 billion a year by sophisticated manipulations and arrangements. Tom Hanks adds the incredible amount of humor and playfulness to this storyline, making it one of the brightest parts of the movie. Finally, all the efforts result in a successful implementation of Wilson's plan into reality.

However, this plan appeared short-sighted as Afghanistan freedom fighters revealed their low loyalty to the American supporters and used their guns against the U.S. military, as well as against Russians. However, this does not reduce the fact that Charlie Wilson was a key figure in the U.S. participation in an armed conflict between Afghanistan and Russia.

As opposed to other movies about politicians that describe them either as heroes or tyrants and dictators, "Charlie Wilson's War" does neither. Mike Nichols made an attempt to present an American politician as a regular person who has his strengths and weaknesses just like any other American does. He depicted Charlie Wilson as a passionate and straightforward man who desires to make a difference, though values the simple amusement and has a sense of humor. This sense of humor is present in every phrase of the movie which makes it very entertaining. Mike Nichols satirically describes the twists and turns of the U.S. politics, though tends to show that high principles are compatible with the pleasure

principles. “Charlie Wilson’s War” is a comedy that refers to serious topics without distorting the facts.

The cast of the movie makes it attractive in the eyes of the audience as such actors as Tom Hanks and Philip Hoffman, and actresses as Julia Roberts make a significant contribution to the success of the film. It is pleasant to see Tom Hanks playing not a clean-cut character in this movie, but rather a liberal libertine who is busy thinking of the consequences of Soviet aggression while taking a bath in a hot tub with a Playboy model and a glass of Scotch. It is sure interesting to observe Hanks’ transformation. I found myself still falling under the influence of his charisma even when he played such a controversial character.

I liked the movie for its easiness and simplicity. The fact that Nichols managed to make the complex and tangled Wilson’s scheme comprehensible makes me suggest that he put some effort into the investigation of this story. I also enjoyed the actors play as they breathed life into the screenplay and made the movie bright and vivid. “Charlie Wilson’s War” suggests that even if the consequences of Charlie Wilson’s actions appeared to go far beyond the expected results, it is useful to see the irony of this story and perceive it with humor.

Mike Nichols created an interesting movie, based on actual historical events, that sure entertains the viewer. It is an uneasy task to catch the audience with a documentary-like movie and make it truly entertaining. However, Mike Nichols accepted this challenge and successfully produced a great movie that may find its well-earned place in the history of the American pop culture.