

# SPEAKING CANDIDLY

IT looks as if the Underground Movement will continue to be active in Hollywood for a long time after it has come to the surface in Europe. It has been the theme, with variations, of a large percentage of the films seen in recent months, and it crops up again in the latest batch, being played mezzo forte in *The Cross of Lorraine*, and con espressione in *Hostages*. Last week, as we noticed, there were even some echoes of it from Arabia, ancient as well as modern.

## THE CROSS OF LORRAINE

(M-G-M)



FOR about three-quarters of its length this is much better than average drama — a study of the reactions of a varied group of French soldiers in a German military prison, to which they are sent when their country surrenders. Tay Garnett, the director, has treated the subject with some insight, and his Frenchmen steer clear of many of the clichés of behaviour which screen characters in such circumstances are commonly forced to adopt. All of them are not cast in the heroic mould; some of the bravest lose their nerve at times and have spasms of doubt, while at least one (Hume Cronyn) is frankly a collaborationist, not so much because he lacks the courage to resist as because he can see no point in resisting. The priest (Sir Cedric Hardwicke) meets a martyr's death when he conducts a forbidden religious service, but not before he has wavered and been on the verge of seeking an easier way out. Though the leading character, a young lawyer (Jean Pierre Aumont), redeems himself finally by organising a prison break and joining the Resistance Movement, his civilised instincts revolt against the summary justice meted out to the collaborationist by his fellow-prisoners, and he is for a time under grave suspicion of co-operating with the Nazis himself. Only one man in the group has motives and reactions that are as clear-cut and devoid of sentiment as his captors — and he is not a Frenchman but a Spaniard (Josef Calleia) who has learnt what ruthlessness means in the Civil War. He expects no mercy and is prepared to give none.

So long as the players are in the prison-camp or in process of getting out of it back to France, *The Cross of Lorraine* is intelligent, brutal, emotionally disturbing — and remarkably well acted. It is propagandist, naturally, but the propaganda is inherent in the subject and does not obtrude too obviously on the action. Of course, if you question the assumption that this is the normal way in which the Germans treat their prisoners — especially French prisoners — then you may reasonably question the validity of the whole film. But such doubts will not arise in the minds of more than about one per cent of any audience. More debatable from all points of view is the finale, when the escaped prisoners link up with the Underground, assist the inhabitants of a

village to revolt against the Germans and to scorch their earth, and then lead them all off into the false light of a Hollywood dawn.

## HOSTAGES

(Paramount)



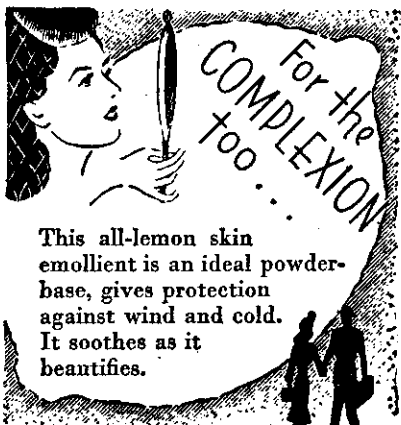
ANOTHER Hollywood story of Europe's Underground, this time from the "C" pigeon-hole (Czech). A Nazi lieutenant in Prague commits suicide; the Nazis, for their own wicked reasons, decide to regard it as murder, and collect hostages. There are 26 of them, but for the purposes of the story only two are important — one (Oscar Homolka) because he is a Czech mine-owner and a thorough-going collaborationist and has a daughter; the other (William Bendix) because he is, in spite of his stupid looks, the Genius of the Underground Movement. The Nazis at first don't realise what a rich haul they have made. When they do check up on the identity of the collaborationist they decide to shoot him anyway and keep his mines exclusively for themselves; but by the time they have identified the stupid cloak-room attendant as the underground genius, he has managed to escape. Meanwhile the collaborationist's daughter, who began by trying to rescue her father by bribery, has started collaborating with the Underground and is in love with one of its members (Arturo de Cordova). Though they don't succeed in saving the old man or the other 24 hostages, they do succeed in saving their own skins from the Gestapo, while the Genius and his followers succeed most spectacularly, if improbably, in blowing up the Prague waterfront.

If this resumé appears a trifle involved I can only remark that it is simple compared with the story as a whole, which continually ties itself in knots with the object (a) of demonstrating the inefficiency and sadism of the Nazis, and (b) of giving a remarkably cosmopolitan cast of players the chance to exercise a wide variety of talents and accents. Among the players, the most interesting piece of casting is that of the Greek actress, Katina Paxinou, as one of the Underground; the most curious is that of William Bendix (who has made his name as a 100 per cent. Bowery type) as the Czech genius; and the most depressing is that of Luise Rainer as the collaborationist's daughter. This is Miss Rainer's first appearance since she walked out of Hollywood in 1939 with the vow that she would never return. It is a pity she didn't keep it, for the explosion which wrecks the Prague waterfront in the final scene of *Hostages* is scarcely less shattering than the effect this film will have on any reputation as a front-rank performer which Miss Rainer may still have left. How on earth did we ever get the idea that she was a great actress? (Yet she must have been fairly good to win those two Academy Awards.) Her whole idea of acting now is simply to show the whites of her eyes whenever she comes within camera-range — a technique which must be even more disconcerting to her fellow-players than it is to the audience.



Ah! that's  
**Persil**  
**Whiteness**

P.219.322



This all-lemon skin emollient is an ideal powder-base, gives protection against wind and cold. It soothes as it beautifies.

Apply Lemon Glisco to rough or chapped hands. It makes hands soft and lovely — keeps them supple.

JUST A LITTLE  
**Lemon Glisco**  
IS ENOUGH TO BEAUTIFY

Woolwarths, McKenzies, Toiletry Counters & elsewhere.  
Cook & Ross Ltd., Mfrs., 779 Colombo St., Christchurch.