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fanatics and will arouse nothing much except cynicism in the rest?

BY interspersing newsreel shots and similar factual material of indisputable veracity with studio re-enactments of selected portions of Davies' book, and by employing skilled actors with some facial resemblance to the historic personalities they portray, the film achieves an air of authenticity that is, superficially, very effective. The book itself consists of official reports, State documents and diary jottings, and the producers must be given full credit for their technical ingenuity in shaping this ponderous mass of fact and opinion into some kind of cinematic form.

For spectacle they have used, most notably, sequences from the magnificent Soviet film, *Song of Youth*, showing a May Day parade in Red Square, together with scenes of the Russian Ballet and of luxurious diplomatic receptions in Moscow, at which Soviet officials wear full evening-dress with complete aplomb. For "human interest" there is Mr. Davies' daughter, who is squired by handsome young Russians, and Mr. Davies' wife (played by Ann Harding) who gets along famously with Mme. Molotov, especially when she visits the latter's cosmetic salon. For comedy there are the diplomatic wisecracks with which Ambassador Davies and his Russian comrades make monkeys out of the German, Japanese, and occasionally the British officials. This repartee is very clever and very amusing, but it would have been a great deal more convincing if the "baddies" had been allowed to score just one or two points; just as it would have added something to verisimilitude if high life in Moscow had not so closely resembled high life in Hollywood, and if occasionally a note of doubt or criticism had been allowed to creep into Ambassador Davies' voice.

As for "intrigue" there are the Treason Trials. These actually lasted over many months, and occupy pages in the book: in the film they are squeezed into a single courtroom sequence, and Marshal Tukachevsky (who had in reality been secretly executed some time before, perhaps after a trial in camera, but perhaps not) is here shown facing his accusers in open court along with Bukharin, Yagoda and the rest of the plotters. As screen drama, this trial scene is very good, but the whole complicated issue of the Purges is presented with a simplicity naive in the extreme. Trotsky is uncompromisingly indicted as the major villain of the piece, responsible for persuading the accused to sell their country to Germany and Japan.

SIMILARLY, the whole involved pattern of international diplomacy between 1936 and 1941, which puzzled all observers of the period (including Ambassador Davies) and caused the most contradictory antics among the supporters as well as the opponents of the Soviet Union, is explained away here in the simplest possible terms. Roosevelt and Stalin (who appears not very persuasively in the person of an actor named Mannart Kippen) are shown to have been right about everything, while the representatives of the other powers are either vacillating, stupid, or unscrupulous. There are some justifiable knocks at the British during

the Chamberlain era, but even the fiercest opponents of "appeasement" may have some difficulty in swallowing the black-and-white explanation which the film offers for Stalin's Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler: However, by taking an entry in the book out of its context and embroidering it, the film depicts a meeting between Davies and Churchill (who is laying bricks in his garden) which suggests that Churchill in 1938 was almost as enlightened in his outlook towards Russia and world affairs as the statesmen of America.

Towards the end we see Mr. Davies back in Washington presenting the fruits of his mission to a back-view impersonation of President Roosevelt, and then conducting an impassioned campaign against opponents of his policy in Congress and outside. At last the film comes right back to Hollywood in order that Warners' Celestial Choir may assure us, in the phoniest of finales, that we really are our brother's keeper.

SINCE this is a controversial film, and this is a controversial review of it, I do not expect some of the views I have expressed to go unchallenged. I hope, however, that they will not be completely misunderstood. Like many other people, I will go much farther than Ambassador Davies in admiration of the Russians; but I do not see why we should jettison our critical faculties at the behest of the Brothers Warner. Although I suggest you see the picture and judge for yourself, the points I have raised are not trifling ones. *Mission to Moscow* throws into sharp relief that lack of discrimination, that uncritical extravagance, and that failure to recognise that grey, not black or white, is the predominating colour in the world, which constitute the great mental disease of our age. Hollywood itself has that disease very badly—and is doing more than almost any other agency to spread it.

A GUY NAMED JOE (M-G-M)

THE third guy named Joe is Spencer Tracy, only he isn't really named Joe, he's named Pete, but he's called Joe because, as a small boy explains, that's what they call any "right guy" in the U.S. Army Air Corps. After this somewhat incoherent opening, A.G.N.J. settles down to being a nice, simple, though long-drawn-out excursion into metaphysics on behalf of the Allied Nations and the box-office. After the opening scenes in which Pete and a girl ferry-pilot (Irene Dunne) make prolonged but convincing love to one another, he is killed on a bombing mission and, as much to his own surprise as that of the audience, finds himself in what is presumably the Flyers' Heaven (Luftwaffe men not admitted) where Lionel Barrymore maintains strict discipline as officer commanding. Pete then learns that his job is to return to earth and teach young pilots to fly and fight. His assignment is a nervous youngster (Van Johnson) who reacts so well to Pete's ghostly sponsorship that he is soon almost as good a flyer as Pete himself was. But Pete did not shed the emotion of jealousy along with his earthly body, as is soon apparent when the girl turns up at the New Guinea airfield and she and Pete's protégé fall in love. It takes a sharp reprimand from Barrymore's ghost, plus a few other

things, to square the metaphysical triangle.

A Guy Named Joe has several uneasy moments and suffers, like so many M-G-M productions, from trying to use up too many feet of film; but Tracy handles his uncanny assignment with wit and discernment, and the film has the decided merit of employing a theme which has been used only once within recent memory: in *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*.

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