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Speaking Candidly, by G.M.

# THAT BURMA FILM

## OBJECTIVE, BURMA

(Warner Bros.)

THIS is the film there has been all the fuss about. I saw it on the same evening as it achieved the doubtful distinction of getting into the BBC news and on to the cable page as a result of having been suspended in Great Britain, following protests about the undue prominence which it gives

to the part played by American forces in the reconquest of Burma. The fuss apparently started when an English critic said that the film implied that Burma was liberated by a battalion of American paratroops, two Gurkha guides, and a Chinese officer, and ignored the major role played by the British.

It is a pity for nations to start behaving like film stars who throw temper tantrums because their names aren't given enough prominence in credit titles. All

the same this sort of thing does happen from time to time, and there is usually an explanation for it. Obviously there is more behind the suspension of *Objective, Burma* than just a typical outburst of American trumpet-blowing by Hollywood, for nobody expects modesty from Hollywood, and anyway this outburst is no more raucous than many others during the past four or five years. It just so happens that this particular trumpet-blast, coming at this psychological moment, has caused the walls of British patience to fall down.

In fact, the film does contain a foreword and an end-piece which indicate, perhaps inadequately, that there were other people besides Americans fighting in the Allied cause in Burma and that what we see here is only one incident (fictional at that) in the whole campaign. The trouble is, I suppose, that unless you are looking out for them you don't normally pay much attention to such announcements. At any rate, so far as the people of Great Britain are concerned, one can feel sympathy with them in their irritation, while regretting it, because their men were so predominantly concerned in the Burma campaign; and so far as Australia is concerned, I think that the public there might very likely tear up the seats and throw them at the screen when the American characters in the story discuss New Guinea as if it were a purely American job. But so far as New Zealand is concerned, I believe there is nothing in it to make our people lose their tempers, though now that their attention has been so sharply drawn to the film they may possibly be on the look-out for an argument.

\* \* \*

THERE still remains the question of whether *Objective, Burma*, considered purely as a film and not as a political stalking-horse, is worth taking much notice of. Well it is, as a matter of fact, a better-than-average example of Hollywood warfare; and perhaps because he doesn't have any girls to show off in front of, I found Errol Flynn much more bearable than usual, though when it comes to portraying the subtler emotions he has about as much idea of acting as the typewriter which is writing this review. He is the leader of a battalion of paratroops assigned to blow up a Japanese radar station in the jungle and so prepare the way for the Allied invasion of Burma. They take along an American newspaperman (Henry Hull), which rather complicates things for them, but adds to the interest of the audience because Mr. Hull does know how to act.

The first part of their assignment is accomplished just a little too easily, even by Hollywood standards. I have never been more impressed by the extremely lethal qualities of Hollywood firearms (except in cowboy pictures, of course), because when Mr. Flynn's paratroops come upon the Jap garrison of the radar station they simply mow 'em down; everyone stone-dead, not a wriggle anywhere, let alone an attempt to shoot back. When the party tries to return to its base, however, the odds become a little more even; and though you always feel pretty sure that Mr. Flynn at least will make it, you do occasionally wonder how. As the minutes pass

(continued on next page)

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