

SPEAKING CANDIDLY

NAZI AGENT

(M-G-M)



I CAN recommend this if you want to see another story about that underground war against the spy menace which, to judge by the number of recent films on the topic, must occupy at least 90 per cent of the attention of all belligerents. Here we have Conrad Veidt in the dual role of twin German brothers—one the scholarly, amiable Otto Decker, a naturalised and patriotic American, the other the Herr Baron Hugo von Dettner, German consul in New York and a Narzee of the nastiest type. The discovery of an over-printed blue Guatemalan (I'm no stamp-collector myself, so I may have got it wrong), is just about the most exciting event in Otto's life until Brother Hugo turns up and blackmails him into letting his Old Curiosity Shop be used as a post-office for a spy and sabotage ring which is engaged in sending convoys for Britain to the bottom of the Atlantic. Otto patriotically rebels, Hugo arrives to execute him in the name of the Reich, Hugo stops the bullet by mistake, Otto impersonates Hugo, takes over the German consulate and the control of the saboteurs, and proceeds to put their pot on. Result: the convoys are saved, the U.S. Government closes all the consulates and ships the Narzees back home, Otto being most unfortunately among them.

It would be bad enough, I imagine, if you or I were ever called on to impersonate an ordinary citizen whose body we had just dumped in the harbour (presuming, of course, that we looked sufficiently like him for a start). If we survived the more obvious pitfalls of

cutting his best friends in the street and calling his typist "Miss Brown" instead of "Lucy," and even if we passed muster with his wife, we'd probably trip up on some simple detail like the way he held his knife or his views on fire-watching. Think, then, how much more difficult it would be to have to step right into the shoes of a man like Baron von Dettner, and not only have to pick up all the loose threads of a consulate and a sabotage agency, but also know just where you stood with all the beautiful fifth columnists who worked for you. However, Conrad Veidt is a man of parts, including dual parts, and having got rid of Otto's beard and scholarly stoop—with the result that he looks once more exactly like Conrad Veidt—he is almost immediately transformed into the brisk, businesslike Hugo, quite *au fait* with a myriad details of code, sabotage, and Mysterious Beauties.

Nothing could make this story probable, but Mr. Veidt is such a good actor that he can at least make it entertaining, and in parts, exciting. Playing opposite him is Ann Ayars, a Mysterious Beauty whose Kisses Mean Death (vide advertisements). While I regret to inform you that so far as I could see, nobody actually gets kissed to death in the film, I am also happy to say that it retains sufficient integrity to defy convention and reach an unhappy ending.

SOUTH OF SUEZ

(Warner Bros.)



WOT a Tangled Web We Weave, When First we Practise to Deceive! I half expected Eric Blore so to sum up *South of Suez* before the final clinch and fade out but I find I'll have to do it myself. You may say it's hackneyed, but so was *South of Suez*, though that doesn't mean it wasn't enjoyable. I haven't sat through a film that was so vocally enjoyed for many a long day, but the fact that I saw it at a matinee during the school holidays probably explains that.

In the opening sequence we are introduced to the hero (George Brent), a diamond mining engineer in Tanganyika, and to another mining engineer (George Tobias) whom, since he has close-cropped hair, thick glasses, talks with a guttural accent and belts the natives (on the tucker-bag and elsewhere) with his jolly sjambok, we have no difficulty whatever in picking as the Villain of the Piece. Mr. Brent joins forces with an English expatriate whom Tobias has been trying to cheat out of his claim. The Englishman, who has promised to join his ever-loving daughter (Brenda Marshall) in Cairo in a month, is murdered by the villain, who frames it on gallant George Brent. However, our hero escapes (with all the diamonds from the claim, too) after being thrillingly pursued by a posse, and reaches the coast, where he stows away. On board ship he is succoured by a seaman (Eric Blore), and when next we see them Mr. Brent, name changed but moustache intact, has miraculously metamorphosed into a

financier (at least, that's our guess) and Mr. Blore into the financier's—yes, we knew you'd guess—valet.

Then begins the search for the puckered sahib's daughter, with Brent rather *en Monte Cristo*. The unfortunate girl is found on the verge of penury, eating her heart out in a miserable little country house (36 rms. incl. ballrm, dngm., 3 drg.rm., svts. quar., us. off., stble.). But the dashing young engineer arrives in time (huzza!) and Love is Born. Then Fate begins to play the hand. The sweet young girl tells George how she hates with an *undying hate* the villainous young partner who bumped off her papa. Mr. Brent dare not discover himself and waits pensively homeward, stopping en route to pull a corpse out of the Thames and plant on it his passport, ticket-of-leave, and the medal he won at Mining School. But he has reckoned without Scotland Yard, and on the eve of his betrothal he is yanked off on a charge of having murdered himself. *Quel justice poétique!* But do not despair, there is still a reel and a-half to go, and in a courtroom scene that would make Lord Reading spin in his grave, justice is ultimately done and the star-crossed lovers are reunited. Not exactly an opus, perhaps, as exhibitors understand the term, but worth almost all of your one-and-sixpence, if it doesn't mean going out on a wet night.

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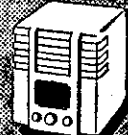
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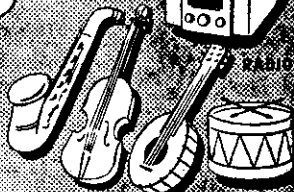
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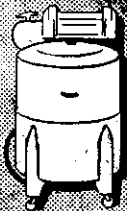
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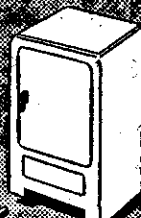
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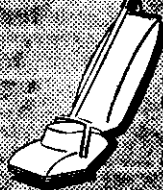
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MAE WEST came out of six months' hibernation recently and announced that so overwhelming was her admiration of the brave Russians that she intended to make a picture of their Empress Catherine the Great.

"The Russians are doin' such marvellous fightin' and everybody's interested in Russia now," drawled Mae. "I'll call the film 'Catherine Was Great.' And added pensively "We'll make the scenes intimate rather than spectacular."

"Catherine kept up her interest in men till she was 70. I want to show how she ruled men with one hand and Russia with the other."

Having read all about Catherine and her long line of lovers, Mae commented, "Guess Catherine had to be smart to take all those different men and find out all they knew."

"I'll be serious drama."

—News Review