

THEY TALKED . . .



Left: While British troops drink and gossip unconcernedly in a bar parlour, a Nazi agent (Mary Clare) drinks in information
Above: Head of the spies in Britain is an antiquarian bookseller (Stephen Murray, who in real life is a lance-corporal in the Army)



Left: One of the victims of the spies is a Dutch refugee girl (Nova Pilbeam) who picks up information from her soldier sweetheart

The War Office Films A Spy Story

EVERYBODY is familiar with those posters "They talked . . . This is what happened," but perhaps the best propaganda on the theme of dangerous talk in war time is the feature-length British film "The Next of Kin". It is also an exciting spy melodrama. Made originally as a training film for the Fighting forces only, it is now being shown to civilians. It is illustrated here by "stills", and is reviewed by our critic.



WHEN the theatre lights went up and I looked around at the preview audience, I caught myself wondering if there were any spies in the house! It was, I am sure, an audience of irreproachable integrity, but *The Next of Kin* has that kind of effect on you, and I suppose it could be said that to the extent that it does have that effect, to the extent that it makes you suspicious of your neighbour, distrustful of the man beside you in the tram or at your elbow in the pub, and accordingly as it puts a curb upon your tongue, this film will be serving its primary purpose, which is certainly not entertainment. For *The Next of Kin* is no ordinary

film; it was made in secrecy in Great Britain as a War Office training film for members of the Fighting Forces, to impress them with the danger of giving away vital information to the enemy by idle conversation. But again, it is no ordinary instructional film; it was produced by Michael Balcon, of Ealing Studios, with a cast composed partly of professional players (such as Nova Pilbeam, Mary Clare, Stephen Murray), partly of regular members of the Forces (including commando units). Then the Brasshats looked at the film and saw that it was good—too good to be shown solely to the troops. So now this full-length feature has been released for public exhibition, and I think you will agree that, while it certainly serves its primary purpose of educating people to be oysters, it also manages to be very entertaining in the process.

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BY entertaining I mean that it holds your interest throughout. It is a tough film, it pulls few punches, but it is human, competent, and authentic. And it has a story which is as ingenious and as exciting as any purely fictional melodrama but which at the same time is relevant to the world we are unfortunately living in. This is, in fact, a war film that comes pretty close to the ideal of topical entertainment about real situations and real people that I have frequently expounded in these pages.

The title is derived from the familiar War Office announcement of casualties, "The next of kin have been informed,"

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Left: Another spy is a striptease artist at a theatre near the camp where the troops are stationed

Below: A Nazi spy who has landed in England by parachute is betrayed by the harness marks on his back

