

BRUTALITY ON THE SCREEN

THE review by G.M. of "Commandos Strike at Dawn" ("Listener," July 23), in which under the heading "Laughing at Death," he deplored the reaction of a large section of the audience to the scenes of slaughter, has brought in two letters—one from an air-craftsman who approves of G.M.'s point, and one from a civilian who strongly disagrees.

TO THE EDITOR,

Sir,—May I congratulate your film reviewer, "G.M." for drawing attention to an unpleasant and noticeable trait of the modern film audience—the tendency to laugh in a gloating fashion when brutalities are pictured on the screen. This attitude, which "G.M." deprecates in his review of the film *Commandos Strike at Dawn*, is one which should cause some concern as showing an increasing indifference to the canons of civilised behaviour. Some of our audiences, indeed, behave like a crowd of Roman citizens at a gladiatorial combat; perhaps the inference is significant if we recall the state of Rome when the *panem et circenses* policy was current.

A.C.2 (New Plymouth).

Sir,—"G.M." has the nerve to call himself a film critic. I've often meant to write and say what I think of him, but I could put it off no longer when I read his review of *Commandos Strike at Dawn*.

Yes, I was one of the audience who shouted and applauded at the gory scenes, and I can vouch for the fact that quite a lot of men in uniform did the same. Everyone knows how brutal the Germans are to people they have conquered. Isn't it natural that people with any spirit at all should shout and laugh when they see scenes of Germans being slaughtered?

Another thing he overlooks is that the men who were cleaning up the Germans in the film are the finest fighters in the world, and I don't mean maybe, and there's nothing more natural than an English admiral saying "Good Hunting." What does "G.M." want him to do: strike a pose as they do in a lot of American films and say, "The eyes of the nation are upon you"?

Time and again he has given second grading to pictures which have run for two or three weeks at first-class theatres. A good picture is one that pleases the public.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I volunteered for service overseas nearly three years ago, and was denied the chance of fighting for the Empire to which I am privileged to belong, and when I see men in battledress on the screen smashing the Germans in fiction and in fact I see them doing what I'd like to do, and I yell and laugh and enjoy every minute of it.

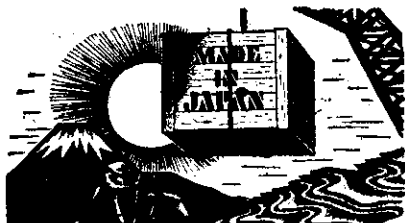
GEORGE BELL (Wellington).

JAPAN'S GLOBAL CONCEIT

(Continued from previous page)

Guinea is such that it holds 'Australia in its arms. Borneo . . . has rich oil and many other material resources . . . Manado, on the northern tip of Celebes Island, is an important military gate to the Pacific Ocean, along with Davao of the Philippines and Ternate of the Moluccas. East of Celebes are the extremely important Moluccas Islands . . ."

And finally, Komaki assigned to the Philippines their place in Japan's backyard: "The Philippine Islands' . . . development by the United States was centred



on Luzon Island, around Manila. However, the islands in the central part and Mindanao at the south also possess rich material resources." The purpose of Japan's large settlement on Mindanao Island is frankly stated: "Mindanao is a geographically strategic location, being right across the Moluccas from Australia. Davao will be an important military base in the future to guard the southern areas."

The Pattern is Consistent

Professor Komaki's lectures may sound like the hallucinations of an insane jingoist, but the ideas he expounded come from roots which go deep into Japanese history. Japan's dream of world conquest goes back at least to 1592, when General Hideyoshi invaded Korea. Hideyoshi's forces finally met disaster when the Koreans met them with iron-clad gunboats, and Japan went into seclusion for over two centuries; but the gory old general remains to this day a national hero.

The memorial supposedly offered to the Emperor by Prime Minister Baron Tanaka in 1927 was identical in many respects with Hideyoshi's ambitions. "In order to conquer the world," wrote Tanaka, "we must first conquer China. If we succeed in conquering China the rest of the Asiatic countries and the South Sea countries will fear us and surrender to us. Then the world will realise that eastern Asia is ours and will not dare to violate our rights. This is the plan left to us by Emperor Meiji, the success of which is essential to our national existence."

Komaki's historic series of lectures was quite consistent with this statement of policy, except for the fact that Japan did not wait for the complete conquest of China before moving southward. Komaki spoke at a time when Japan was glowing with over-confidence because of her successes in Malaya. Future historians may well rate the "Komaki Memorial" as the most significant document to come out of Japan during the war.

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