

quires no great imaginative feat to identify it with one of the Basque provinces, nor the ship that finally runs the blockade with the exploits of Captain "Potato" Jones and his fellow-adventurers.

If The Cap Fits

REACTION to a film like this is peculiarly personal and partisan. While rejoicing that Walter Wanger had enough intestinal fortitude to brave the dictators as much as he has, I must admit that I should not be nearly so enthusiastic about "Blockade" if the emphasis had been in the other direction.

Of course, it is possible that Franco's admirers on seeing the film will be able to look upon the heroes of the piece as Nationalists and not as Republicans; though in this connection it would be relevant to ask whether the Republicans have ever been guilty of blockading ports and submarining food ships.

Apart from this, however, most of the special propaganda in "Blockade" is of the "if-the-cap-fits-wear-it" type. But there is also a kind of general propaganda in the picture that goes rather beyond partisanship and becomes an indictment of any kind of war that makes

victims of civilian populations. In this aspect, vigorously and graphically presented, the film is at its best.

The Beautiful Spy

OTHERWISE it is not so memorable.

Faced with the difficult position of blending realism, impeachment and melodrama, Walter Wanger has fallen back on the somewhat familiar story of the beautiful female spy in love with the man who is bound by duty to track her down. As this heroine, Madeleine Carroll continues the cinematic vocation of fishing for trouble in international waters which she began in "The 39 Steps" and "The General Died at Dawn." While it is something of a relief to rest one's gaze upon Miss Carroll's patrician beauty among all those starved and desperate Spanish faces, Hollywood has made her too much the Park Avenue blonde for her to be convincing as the "femme fatale" of "Blockade."

Henry Fonda's Chance

WITH Henry Fonda it is very different. This very able, hitherto badly-treated young man at last gets the chance he deserves. It will, I am afraid, always be his misfortune to suffer on the screen—he has that kind of face—but in everything except his American accent he strikes me as being an excellent choice for the idealistic, deeply sensitive young Spanish farmer who rallies the peasants to defend their land, and later becomes an intelligence officer.

The other leading characters need not bother us long. In the circumstances, Leo Carillo probably does the best he can with the job of providing light relief. John Halliday pops up to complicate the plot at awkward moments in his role of the soldier-of-fortune who betrays his friends with an oily smile on his face. He is theatrical—sometimes almost ludicrous.

But the minor types are well chosen, the settings for the most part good. If the film is slow to get under way, that is largely because of the producer's desire to present a sharp contrast between Spain at peace and Spain at war. Less successful are the interjections of comedy, melodramatic double-crossing and romance.

This Is Not War!

ON the whole, "Blockade" is noteworthy and impressive not only because it is the first real drama of the Spanish war, but also because, whenever possible, it does not pull its punches. It is notable also for substituting for the conventional fade-out embrace the following broadside from fighting Fonda:

"Peace! Where can you find it? Our country has been turned into a battlefield. There's no safety for old people and children. . . . Women can't keep their families safe in their houses—they can't be safe in their own fields. Churches, schools and hospitals are targets. . . . It's not war—war is between soldiers—it's murder! Murder of innocent people. There's no sense to it. The world can stop it—WHERE'S THE CONSCIENCE OF THE WORLD?"

In justice to myself for repeating it, I think it should be mentioned that that stark appeal was greeted with ap-

plause—an almost unprecedented reception from a preview audience.

But it could also be mentioned that I overheard one cynic remark: "Where's the conscience of the world? In its pockets, of course!"

"Rosalie" Is Another M-G-Marathon

["Rosalie," M-G.M., directed by W. S. Van Dyke, starring Nelson Eddy, Eleanor Powell. Just released.]



ALSO RAN

A SCIENTIST of an age in the distant future, delving among the films of the present, might very well be excused if he arrived at the conclusion that civilisation in America in the nineteen-thirties centred round two institutions known as West Point and Annapolis Academy, just as he might similarly be excused for thinking that the Trooping of the Colour was the chief industry of Great Britain.

How many times have the husky lads of West Point and Annapolis played football for us on the screen? How many times have they paraded up and down in front of the cameras in their pretty uniforms, doing complex, perfectly-timed routines that are neither quite drill nor dancing? How many times have they serenaded their co-eds with rollicking choruses or swooning love-songs? How many times have they shown us their childish initiation ceremonies and other quaint local customs?

Chorus-Boy Soldiers

I DO not expect answers to those questions. It is doubtful if anyone could give them. But if you are thinking of counting up, you can start with "Rosalie," because the whole rather tiresome business is there again. And it makes little difference that in this case the marching routines are expertly performed by Hollywood chorus boys and not by genuine West-Pointers—West Point, yes, even West Point, having apparently become a trifle tired of the liberties which the film-makers have been taking within the sacred precincts.

However, it should be recorded that in order not to tread on any military toes, Singer Nelson Eddy was given five weeks' intensive schooling by a West Point Lieutenant before he became Cadet Dick Thorpe, the hero of "Rosalie."

Her Dream Lover

WEST POINT ritual is not the only thing to see in "Rosalie." Oh, dear, no!

For the hero falls in love with a minx from Vassar Girls' College and announces that he is her dream soldier. He is to be excused for not having suspected that she is really a Ruritanian princess in disguise, for anyone less like a foreign princess than Eleanor Powell I can hardly imagine.



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