

Movietone news; they buy film from freelancers or from their own correspondents; finally, if necessary they enact sequences.

The episodes are carefully written and skillfully edited with a very specific point of view—the standpoint of a militantly alert capitalism. While the three best things in the four releases—the Hitler episode in the second release, the Huey Long sequence in the third and the section on the Soviet Union in the fourth—are not anti-working class, one of the other episodes did give a foretaste of what the *March of Time* will do in any acute political crisis. A completely reactionary, chauvinistic and fascist tendency appeared in the section called "Mexico," in release number three.

The off-screen voice states that "socialistic" Mexico had outlawed religion. But the clergy and the other generation of peasants are determined to continue their worship. There are scenes of improvised churches in caves. The scene shifts to the interior of a peasant's house. There are a number of children in a huddle, mechanically repeating again and again: "There is no God. There is no God. Professor Gonzales told us there is no God." This is acted so badly that it is embarrassing. The aged parents come in and hear the mechanical chant, "There is no God." The old man incites the whole village and they rush into the home of Gonzales, the teacher. We see a rope. He admits attacking religion and they seize him. The final shot shows the white wall of the Church with its cross. The shadow of the professor, hanging by his neck, is projected on the wall. The direct approval of lynching is pointed up by a closeup of the placard on the professor's body, stating he was killed for "socialistic education."

Up to now the furtherance of a clear political line has been subordinated to the major task of establishing the *March of Time* on the market. The *March of Time* plays up the Nye munitions investigation, makes fun of Huey Long, attacks Hitler and produces a sequence on the Soviet Union that is superficially favorable. The script that accompanies the Russian sequence is actually a subtle attack. But the editors made the opportunistic mistake of buying the film from Julien Bryan, a friend of the Soviet Union, who took his film with a friendly point of view.

The form of *The March of Time* is not a new development in cinema. The Soviet film makers are old hands at this sort of thing. But *The March of Time* has shown us how effective the newsreel can be. It provides an object lesson and a goal for the documentarists in the revolutionary film movement. The Film and Photo League has for some time been working with the newsreel. While the very nature of their subject matter was exciting and dramatic in itself (the Ford massacre, for instance), their newsreels were formless and as poorly made as the commercial reel. A forward step was made with *Scottsboro* and *Hunger*, but the high peak was reached with *America Today*, No. 1, which

contains portions that are as good as anything that has been recorded in films. And Nykino's *Harbor Scene* (1935), with a script by David Wolff (in itself a work of high literary merit) is a real achievement, superior to anything of the same genre produced in America. But these are isolated examples. There must be more, we must organize our production policy (we have the technical facilities); for the editors of *The March of Time* are correct when they shout "Time Marches On!"

PETER ELLIS.

Other Current Films

Men On Wings (Amkino): A Soviet sound film dealing with aviation and the training of Red Army aviators. Directed by J. Raissman, who gave us *The Soil Is Thirsty* (also known as *Soviet Youth*) a few years ago. As in his earlier film Raissman succeeds more fully in giving us a picture of the new generation in the Soviet Union than in dramatizing his particular theme. The infrequency of English dialogue titles contributes to the film's confusion.

G Men (Warner Bros.), *Let 'Em Have It* (Reliance), *Public Hero No. 1* (M-G-M): Hollywood still gives us films of organized crime. These two are exactly like the series of gangster-glorifying films of a few seasons ago, only now the just as evasive Department of Justice men are the victims.

The Glass Key (Paramount): An ordinary mystery film, evading the possibilities of Dashiell Hammett's book. However, Frank Tuttle, the director, has managed to incorporate two very small scenes that are good and original.

Escape Me Never (United Artists): A film version of a pretentious play about unimportant people, pleasantly acted by an overrated actress, Elizabeth Bergner. Some critics have had to fall back on the cliché that the film is superior to the play. So what? P. E.

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Between Ourselves

JOSHUA KUNITZ is on his way to Soviet Russia, where he will serve as correspondent for THE NEW MASSES. We invite our readers to help give Kunitz his assignments. What do you want to know about the workers' republic? Are you interested in the private every-day life of the people? In what special phase of personal relationships—marriage, divorce, working conditions, vacations? Are cultural matters your chief concern? National minorities? Science in a workers' state? Sports? The more specifically the requests for information are stated, the better will be the material presented. Send us in your requests for stories from Soviet Russia.

THE PRIZE CONTEST for the best proletarian novel, conducted jointly by THE NEW MASSES and the John Day Company, Publishers, is keeping the judges up late these nights. Nearly a hundred novels were submitted, and many are good. We can't say yet when the decision will be announced—there are five judges and a novel takes time to read.

MICHAEL GOLD will write shortly on the proceedings in Paris of the International Writers' Congress for the Defense of Culture. Together with Waldo Frank, head of the League of American Writers, Gold was a delegate to the Congress, just concluded. In addition to his article on this gathering, Gold is to describe in future issues of THE NEW MASSES the actual operation of the United Front of Communists and Socialists in France, which has halted the onrush of fascism there.

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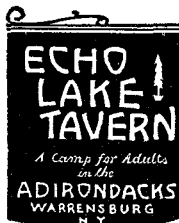
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