

I am sure the fascists and the Roosevelt haters will not want any part of this play. But I am just as certain that all democratically minded men and women will want to see it and that when they do they will respond to it with a sympathetic anger, and a fighting hope welling up from their own experience of life. Put *Decision* on your must list, and see it soon.

HARRY TAYLOR.

## Technicolor by Hearst

New committee to save Hollywood from everything progressive.

MR. HEARST's helpers have been busy again. This time they have prepared and tied up a neatly dangerous little bundle called the Motion Picture Alliance—an organization “for the preservation of American ideals,” which finds itself in sharp revolt against a rising tide of Communism . . . and kindred beliefs which represents the “growing impression that this industry is made up of an dominated by Communists, radicals, and crackpots.”

Look at the line-up. Sam Wood, president, is a producer scarcely known as a friend of the Jews. First Vice-President Walt Disney fought the unionization of the industry consistently and with great thoroughness. As for Rupert Hughes, a member of the executive council, novelist, so-called humorist, and distorter of American history—his weekly anti-Soviet, anti-administration broadcasts over NBC speak for him. These nauseating and sharply fascist diatribes are often good for a big play on the editorial pages of the Hearst sheets.

Undoubtedly the Alliance is intended as a blow at progressive Hollywood and the many fine pro-war films that have come out of the industry's center. A recent editorial in the Hearst NY *Journal American*, whose language is almost identical with that of the MPA's “Statement of Principles,” is the giveaway: “The subversive minority in the industry has connived to produce a long succession of insidious and evil motion pictures to the discredit of the industry and to the detriment of the country. . . . It has made pictures glorifying Communist Russia, ignoring the oppressive and tyrannical character of Bolshevism and inventing virtues for it that have never existed.” One recalls, of course, Hearst's four-footed attacks on all films about the Soviet Union, particularly Lillian Hellman's *North Star*, and *Mission to Moscow*.

This is not the first time that Hitler's old divisive tactic has been used on the West Coast. State Sen. Jack Tenney, California's Dies, whose senate investigating committee whitewashed the Sinarquistas in connection with fifth-column activities, pretended to believe the Hollywood Writers Congress held in Los Angeles last year, was a Red plot. He demanded that the uni-

versity close its doors to the cultural gathering of writers, educators, and members of the armed forces. Tenney's attempt failed—the university and the conference's participants refused to be awed by the bogey and the Writers' Congress was held as scheduled.

The Motion Picture Alliance will without doubt bring a similar reaction. The Los Angeles *Examiner* (Hearst) announced that there were 200 present at the organization's first meeting; the Los Angeles *Times* counted seventy-five. Nobody was able to find more than two actors. Further, and more important, the “vast, unorganized majority” whom the Alliance claims to represent, have proved themselves on the whole, pro-war administration supporters. They realize the meaning of Teller and are wholeheartedly for carrying out the decisions made there. And we are sure they will not be led into fascist, anti-United Nations' groups. M. D.

## The Film Week

“The Sullivans” strikes a warm note . . . “Jane Eyre” . . . “Three Russian Girls.”

OF THE hundreds of instances of self-sacrifice that have come out of the war, perhaps the most moving, the most compassionate is that of the Sullivans of Waterloo, Ia., whose five boys went down with the *Juneau* in the battle of the Solomons. To the Roxy has now come the film limning their history. It is a warm stirring saga of an Irish-American family, rich with the details of living, of five brawling lusty youngsters, full of hell and contrition, rent with quarrels one moment, united in loyalty and affection the next. The biographical picture is neither sentimentalized nor idealized, and if the tenor of their days partakes of the commonplace in the telling, it is only because the story of the Sullivans is the record of small-town America, recognizable and familiar.

In its over-all quality, *The Sullivans* is a fine human document, full of a number of memorable touches. Out of the cradle endlessly rocking, grew the five boys, through Communion, gang fights, their first stolen smoke. One, the youngest, falls in love and acquires a wife and baby. Then comes Pearl Harbor, whose bombing shatters not only battleships and harbor installations but the manners and habits of peacetime America. The Sullivans enlist in the Navy, and are granted their fervent request to fight together on one ship.

The news of the death of the five is beautifully managed, and it is due to director Lloyd Bacon, writers Mary McCall, Jr., Edward Doherty, and Jules Schermer, and to an almost brand new movie cast that the picturization of this family comes off so well. Selena Royale as the mother and Thomas Mitchell as the father infuse

their parts with believability and they steady the youngsters who play the early part of the film with firm and subtle control. Except for Anne Baxter, the sweetheart of the youngest Sullivan, all the actors are new to the films.

Yet, despite the social relations which the family's activities must have invited, there is almost no community interaction between the Sullivans and the rest of the town. They live in a cocoon spun of their clannish preoccupations. When they walk down the street, no other people are to be seen. Neighbors, shopkeepers, co-workers are never a part of their gossip or interest. I do not mean to carp, yet if the film has a major defect, this is it. The subject is loaded with “human interest,” and I am certain that there was a difficult problem in the selection of incidents. Nor can every aspect of existence be crowded into one picture, which as it stands runs very well over two hours. But even a minimal community life would have enriched the story, made it more realistic, would have emphasized even the flavor of their own inner family habits, and would have rooted the Sullivans more firmly in the pattern of American life, as they must have been in actuality.

Today the sole daughter of the family has symbolized the sacrifice of the Sullivans by joining the Waves. The film-makers introduce this fact at a commemorative launching of the warship, USS *The Sullivans*. It is a fitting conclusion to the story of one American family that is in the war all the way.

“JANE EYRE,” the film version of the Charlotte Bronte novel, is meant to be a tale of dark and brooding horror—instead, it is a disappointing and slog-footed creeper. In an attempt to recapture the sultry and forbidding sections of the novel, the film brushes aside the heroine's struggles to escape the tightrope of feminine decorum in Victorian England. Thus critics have called the picture escapist. They are probably right, but it needn't have been, even by its own terms. That is to say, *Jane Eyre* fails not because it chooses to dwell upon the agonies of Edward Rochester, Jane's tormented love interest, but because of the treatment of the material.

The book creates authentic and morbid horror by the situations in which the characters are placed and the exploitation of their reactions. With so skillful and sensitive an actor as Orson Welles as Rochester, supported by Joan Fontaine as Jane, and a cast of able assistants, the picture should have been a lollopaloosa. But instead of following the knowing lead of the novel, the movie's producers lean almost exclusively upon the externalia of melodrama: the carefully guarded door, the shriek in the night, the clanking of unseen chains, mysterious fires, groans and shadows, and wild storms. The interiors are

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dimly lit by flickering candles, the exteriors  
shrouded in fog and mist. Thus the men-  
acing secret, the unknown portent upon  
which the film depends, rests on the special  
effect talents of the studio, rather than  
upon the writers. This technique is fol-  
lowed so relentlessly that when the care-  
fully guarded door is finally unlocked, the  
fires explained, the secret bared, the whole  
business turns out to be anti-climax to the  
crepuscular flummery that all but chokes  
the life out of Bronte.

According to the credit list, Orson  
Welles is not part of the producing staff.  
Nevertheless, so many of his characteristic  
technical touches are present that I suspect  
he had more than an acting interest in  
the film. The photography, for instance,  
is full of the coincidental focusing of fore-  
ground and background that made his pre-  
vious pictures so effective. But in *Jane  
Eyre* the device becomes heavily theatrical.  
It is true that details are fixed with sharp-  
ness and clarity. This quality at its best is  
reminiscent of such men as Eisenstein. But  
while the Soviet movie makers' photography  
is full of the juices of life, here all is quiet;  
not a cloud moves, not a blade of grass  
stirs. The result is a series of portraits,  
sometimes beautiful but always static. As  
a consequence of this immobility, the actors  
seem to perform with an air of self-con-  
scious artifice, so that the love scenes are  
dry and stagey and unbelievable.

One aspect of the film that irked the  
audience was the semi-darkness responsible  
for its tone. Perhaps there was an extra  
reason for it. I saw the show right before  
the dinner hour, and all around me hungry  
people were consulting their watches with-  
out success. It wasn't until the ski-jump  
shots in the newsreel that they could dis-  
cover it was time to go home.

THE American remake of *Girl From  
Leningrad* finally made its appearance  
as *Three Russian Girls*, and with the not-  
able exceptions of the *Times* and the *News*,  
the papers cried stinking fish. One critic  
(*Mirror*) didn't like it because the Red  
Armymen and nurses sing too much. An-  
other (*Sun*) objected to the picture because  
she saw no reason for imitating the origi-  
nal, especially when she disliked the  
original. All the others griped about the  
fact that it was not as good as the Soviet  
product and that Hollywood prettified the  
gals too much. If that is valid criticism,  
then *What So Proudly We Hail* is equally  
reprehensible for the same reason, and *Cry  
Havoc* is a red ink item only because it is  
inferior to the last-named.

As a matter of record, *Three Russian  
Girls* has a number of defects, but they  
are of a minor character. It is so closely  
modeled on the original that its virtues are  
the virtues of its precursor, as are its faults.  
The beautifully filmed battle sequences  
are lifted intact, and these are grafted on  
to some bits of Hollywood hand-to-hand

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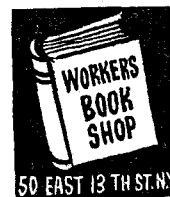
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conflict which, though not possessing the same quality, extend the action somewhat.

The American picture's major departure from the original *Girl From Leningrad* is the introduction of an American flier who falls in love with the nurse commander. It is my opinion that the writers meant this character to serve as a symbol of unity between the two countries. The critics were so busy lambasting the picture that this point was missed entirely. For instance, when the flier is emerging from a postoperative coma, shaken and frightened, the nurse quiets him with the assurance that he is in the hands of friends and that he must have confidence in them. At another point, the flier expresses his hatred for the Nazis and paraphrases Lincoln with the observation that a world half slave and half free cannot endure. The picture closes with a farewell scene as the flier departs for Murmansk—in which he hopes that all the peoples of the world will soon be able to sit around a huge table and celebrate a thanksgiving for victory.

Unfortunately the film dwells a little too lovingly on the personal relationship between the flier and the nurse and thus overemphasizes the romantic motif. Even at that, the affair is handled with adult care and taste, and is never permitted to get out of hand.

The critic who thought that it was superfluous to remake Soviet films along American lines was talking through his professional hat. Any film that contributes to a better understanding of the Russian people is all to the good.

JOSEPH FOSTER.

## Elephant on a Tightrope

(Continued from page 4)

licans sneered at democracy and worked to emasculate it. Up at the headquarters of the Democratic National Committee insiders are fairly optimistic that Thomas Dewey will win the Republican nomination. And, they say, what chance have the Republicans if the American people realize that the next international conference could find Churchill and Stalin sitting down with—Dewey!

Yet any tendency to think that the election is in the bag (or even Roosevelt's nomination) would be one of the surest ways of helping to lose it. Let no one underestimate the capacity of the Republicans to confuse and beguile, particularly in the rural sections and in the small towns outside the mainstream of war industry. The trend revealed in the local elections last November hardly offers ground for complacency. And it ought to be remembered too that it is not enough to re-elect the President; if we are to change the present anti-Teheran Congress into a pro-Teheran one, capable of meeting the great responsibilities of the peace, there is enough to keep all of us busy until election day.

BRUCE MINTON.

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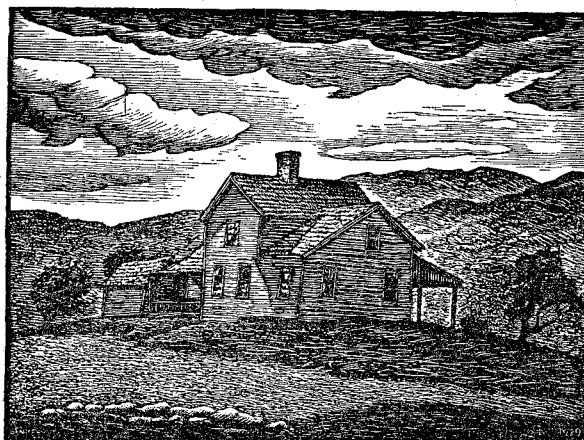
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