Hollywood’s contribution in modelling social values and promotion of patriotism, nationalism and interventionism (1933-1941)

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Doprinos Hollywooda u modeliranju društvenih vrijednosti i promoviranje patriotizma, nacionalizma i intervencionizma (1933-1941)

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CONTENT

1. Introduction

The culture of the "sight and sound" in America during the 1930s created a unique and almost all-inclusive American community. At the beginning of Hollywood as a film industry, during the Silent era, film was a cinematic plebian spectacle. With the advent of sound, the "extraordinary" or "mythic" value of American movies got a more "realist" or "down to earth" quality. Generally speaking, the strength of Hollywood movies of the 1930s is that they operated in a way to renew the public's confidence in life in times of the Great Depression and unsettling international situation. If any form of popular culture can shed light on people's values, the Hollywood of the 1930s is then one of the most likely candidates. In this work, I will claim that the social values of the period I am dealing with (1933 – 1941; from Roosevelt's inauguration to the attack on Pearl Harbour) were corresponding to the political conformism of the American film industry and the MPPDA (Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America), and populist "New Deal" values promoted by more politically-aware filmmakers under the influence of Roosevelt's rhetoric. The movies of the period in question offered the refashioning of the upper-class WASP[1] social values, to accommodate the new moral guidelines of the Hollywood censorship (with strong Catholic influence) and the sense of national and communal unity propagated to clarify American values in times of political reconsideration. During the 1930s, problems had to be shared and resolved through communal help. The sanctity of family life and the "love-thy-neighbour" rule, best nurtured by Frank Capra and his most successful movies of the decade, were the new foundation of the 1930s re-evaluation of the American Dream. Personal integrity was becoming the leading principle in the affirmation of the proper social values. The "regular fellows" or "little people" were becoming the agents of the utilitarian changes.

In addition, I will claim that the defence of democracy, its populist principles and civic liberties against the evil forces of tyranny, social injustice and ultimately Hitler's brand of fascism was the governing principle of Hollywood's politically conscious works. Moreover, I will show that movies across different movie genres regarded patriotism and American exceptionalism as significant constituents of the interventionist course of action. Many successful filmmakers were aiming to expose the oppressiveness of the Nazi regime. Any movie that wanted to deal with the issue realistically, was likely to be banned from the screen. The Hollywood's pragmatic approach to story selection meant that some socially and politically

[1] White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, not same as Puritan, usually linked to the Republican American heritage.

inflammatory themes would be avoided. Allegorical stories noticeable in the 1930s Hollywood output that used Hitler and the Nazis as a source of inspiration, especially to convey the hideous nature of the Nazi xenophobic ideology, were a sign that contemporary political concerns were affecting the lives of all people across the globe, including Americans. Thus, many Hollywood productions would advocate the necessity to intervene on the part of the humanity. In this sense, I will defend the claim that the Hollywood studios, led by the Warner Brothers studio and a few ardent anti-Nazi moviemakers, expressed interventionist tendencies and advocated the U.S. involvement in the new military conflict before the attack on American military base Pearl Harbor made intervention into European affairs inevitable.

I will only deal with first-run and A-production movies, most often produced by the "Big Eight"[2] studios. The lesser productions in the double-feature package common for the 1930s, newsreels, documentaries, cartoons, imported foreign movies and early feature length Disney animation won't be part of this study.[3] The paper will provide textual analysis of the subjects and movie plots, evaluation of censorship regulations and observations by different movie critics, moviegoers and movie players on the aims and popularity of certain movies. The Hollywood officials always stood behind the line of reasoning that the box office is the true sign of a movie's cultural and social impact. For the purpose of this research, the artistic quality of the movies in question is trivial, because when a film achieves certain cultural and box office success, as French movie critic and director Francois Truffaut once asserted, "it becomes a sociological event, and the question of its quality becomes secondary." (Schatz 1989: 4)

[2] Sometimes called the "Eight Majors": Paramount Pictures, Warner Brothers, RKO Pictures, MGM, 20th Century Fox, Universal Pictures, Columbia Pictures and United Artist. They controlled almost all of the American market during the 1930s.

[3] The control big Hollywood studios administered over the distribution always marginalized the distribution of documentaries and imported features, which they and the audience perceived as sometimes dull and sometimes out-of-touch elitist. The American newsreel managements, as precursors to television broadcasting news, had to conform as well to Hollywood moguls' political beliefs that were aligned with the idea of economic self-preservation.

2. Roosevelt's inauguration, the New Deal and Hays Code – what it meant to film industry

The year 1933 was for several reasons a turning point in Hollywood's output and relation to outward agents. Firstly, 4th of March 1933 was the day Roosevelt became the president of the United States of America. After the Market Crash of 1929, the USA was never the same. The 1920s, as a decade usually associated with prosperity, individual success and almost unrestrained pleasures, was over. Scarcely anyone expected it. Hollywood, an industry which at the time provided jobs to numerous and which depended on public demand, got hit severely. The Market Clash was followed by an economic depression of unprecedented proportions. In the case of the Hollywood industry, the troubles began as early as 1931 when almost all of the studios (the exception being the most resilient MGM) had to face financial loss. They lost in revenues more than they could have imagined, "Fox made a loss of $3 million, RKO of $5.6 million, and Warner Brothers of $7.9 million." (Izod 1988: 96) In those troubled times, Roosevelt addressed the public, dramatized the problems and conditions in which he "received" the presidency, and inspiringly proclaimed that "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself". As Shindler points out, the rest of his inaugural speech from 1933 "mixed the conventional appeal to honest government with a request for a mandate for immediate action." (1996: 32) Roosevelt's rhetoric was drenched in sheer optimism. The enemies were defined ("economic royalists"[4]) and the conduct of behaviour was proposed ("social responsibility"). It was obvious that some previously nourished social values will be reappraised. As the public changed, not necessarily willingly, but because of the harsh material conditions caused by the Great Depression, its tastes had changed. The president, as man representing "all Americans" (something keenly repeated over and over again in his public speeches) and Hollywood, as in tune with the public's needs, primarily evoked old, traditional and most recognizable American values (some classified as Puritan, other as WASP). The Puritan morale that honesty, humility and responsibility pay off and the WASP understanding of work ethic were elemental during the early 1930s. The Roosevelt's term didn't even lack the arousal of patriotic feelings. As *Variety* put it: "with NRA (Roosevelt's National Recovery Administration), the flag business commercially and patriotically has been given its biggest boost since the First World War." (Shindler 1996: 37)

[4] President Franklin Roosevelt first reportedly used this phrase in 1936, referring to selfish aristocratic capitalists. (Rosten 1941: 257)

Roosevelt's First inaugural address left quite an impression on the public. Even movie executives weren't immune to its flamboyance. In words of a movie producer Darryl Zanuck, at the time at the Warner Bros. studio, the address was a "bombshell" and he heard it "compared to great speeches like Lincoln's Gettysburg Address." (Muscio 1996: 99) He even got into a fight with director William Wellman over him not willing to reference it in a movie that came out in the dawn of Roosevelt's governance, *Heroes for Sale* (1933). As a consequence, Zanuck added a speech in which a character in the movie calls the address, in a populist manner, "common horse sense" (Shindler 1996: 39). The supposed harmony of the government and movie industry was symbolized by the Blue Eagle of National Recovery Administration (NRA) that appeared in many films' opening credits during the first two years of Roosevelt's presidency.

Legislation that the president passed aren't relevant to this paper. However, certain Roosevelt's reforms (e.g., legally sanctioning unionization and the repeal of Prohibition), had an impact on the Hollywood community, and consequently challenged the production trends they were accustomed to. Moreover, the government and Roosevelt's policies directed at Hollywood, studio moguls and filmmakers were welcoming. One example is NIRA act from 1933 that sanctioned certain monopoly practices, supporting Hollywood's vertical integration.[5]

In these perplexing times, across the Atlantic, on 30th January 1933, Hitler was appointed as chancellor of Germany. One thing was certain from the beginning: the USA, with its new president, should think over its role in the high-stakes politics of world order and see for themselves what does the new Hitler administration mean with its evidently totalitarian rule. The earlier rise of fascism in Italy and even more of Nazism in Germany offered the American film industry endless opportunities for dramatic movie scripts that would inquire into real-life politics. The filmmakers could examine the benefits of democracy or real implications of inhuman fascist conduct. As it is going to be elaborated later, filmmakers were discouraged by Hollywood businessmen (some studio executives and censorship administration) to deal with any kind of misery of everyday life. This meant that issue-oriented and topical movies, among them overtly political ones hurting the prestige of the Nazi regime and its citizens, had to be carefully managed.

[5] Control over all, or almost all, segments of production of a movie (usually divided in production, distribution and exhibition) by a single studio, which meant control over what the audience can see even more apparent.

Roosevelt's term in the office brought one far-reaching novelty: the New Deal. The New Deal wanted the film industry to "design moral boosters". The New Deal had put emphasis on morality rather than ideology. That is why, as Lucia notes, in the "first years of the New Deal the biggest troublemakers in movies were – shysters.[6]" (2015: 185) The New Deal displayed a socially conservative nature. Sklar asserts the New Deal's compatibility with the movie industry: "The New Deal Administration was seeking to boost the morale of a confused and anxious people by fostering a spirit of patriotism, unity and commitment to national values, a political goal that coincided with similar tendencies within the movie industry." (1994: 175) It certainly wanted to restore respect for national institutions. Benevolent authority, epitomized through Roosevelt-like figures, was also inaugurated as important step toward social prosperity. Many movies of the 1933 – 1941 period had promoted the idea that despotic bosses can turn into benevolent father figures who would work for the benefit of their fellowmen. Ideal boss is like Mr. Schultz from *The Little Man, What Now?* (1934), open-minded and receptive to new ideas in times of social chaos in post-WWI Germany. In *The Shop Around the Corner* (1940), in a world stricken by sadness and depression (late 1930s Hungary), the owner of the shop, Mr. Matuschek metamorphoses into a caring boss. After initially displaying moody behaviour and rule-by-fear philosophy, Mr. Matuschek learns that he will lead a happier and less frustrating life if he acts more generously. His employees must sense that he cares for them. Hence, Mr. Matuschek seizes the role of a public benefactor. Moreover, this benevolent authority figure, in these examples embodied by small-business bosses, made sure that before the movie ended, often in its last reel, the New Deal's tolerant and sympathetic governing principles would win. The New Deal could defeat injustices, as long as authority figures, like the judge at the end of *Wild Boys of the Road* (1933) who has to help impoverished boys, i.e. victims of narrow-minded Americans who are standing for unapologetic and hideous face of nativism, "do their part".

Obvious verbal and visual allusions to the New Deal politics can be noticed in a special niche of Warner Brothers' "backstage" musicals that celebrated the New Deal's belief in the downtrodden and working-class, and in those encouraging rural peculiarities (e.g., *42nd Street, Footlight Parade, Dames* and *Gold Diggers of 1933*). In *Footlight Parade* (1933), a "backstage" musical that aimed to show that patriotism is precious and marketable, the dialogue includes the line, "we're giving you a new deal", as Chester Kent (James Cagney), director of Broadway musicals, exhibits sense of extreme confidence and optimism, an approach to life that played a pivotal role in the New Deal's ethic. The New Deal's devotion to the pursuit of

[6] Crooked politicians, bankers, lawyers and newspapermen.

class harmony and spiritual peace, through reforming society's ills and providing social security in times of the Great Depression was instrumental in many Warner Brothers' social dramas. For example, in *Heroes for Sale* (1933), a tragedy story of a returning soldier who is condemned to a life of poverty and anonymity, Roosevelt's inaugural speech is read from a newspaper to the ex-soldier, a "forgotten man"[7], by his friend to cheer him up. As the decade was reaching its coda, the New Deal creed was fading and making place for new international objectives that the principal Hollywood filmmakers were advancing. However, to the American internal matters, the New Deal set of ideas still had contemporary relevance. The finest example of this standpoint is *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), an adaptation of John Steinbeck's acclaimed realist novel published in 1939. The plot of the novel and movie revolves around plain folk, Oklahoma farmers (the Joads), who are down on their luck, as uncaring bankers (Roosevelt's "economic royalists") are confiscating their land and forcing them to leave their homes. The movie, more than the source novel, advocates government intervention through the New Deal policies and propagates a life-affirming instead of a gloomy and politically subversive message. Joseph McBride, in his in-depth analysis of John Ford's work, accurately suggests that by "putting the government camp segment closer to the end of the movie, president's New Deal became the proper solution to the migrant-worker problem." (2011: 311) The common man, like Tom Joad from *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) became central to Roosevelt's coalition with the people. He became the main constituent of "nation-building" and the 1930s patriotism, one aspect that is going to be explored in depth in the rest of the paper.

Apart from the New Deal "Americanism" and Hitler's rise to power, another aspect that makes this time period ideal to examine social values is the enforcement of the censorship, the Production Code or the Hays Code[8]. Even before 1934 there were some regulations imposed on Hollywood productions. The censorship was "haphazard, regional, and capricious." (Doherty 2007: 98) Many films of the 1920s had upset notable organisations with representations of bootleggers, promiscuity and wild jazz parties. There had also been a number of high-profile Hollywood scandals involving the exposure of sordid details of the lifestyle of celebrated actors and filmmakers. In the Silent and what will later be known as pre-Code Hollywood (1928-1933/4), a variety of pressure groups began their course of action. The Catholic Legion of Decency, formed to battle indecent and immoral pictures, and those which

[7] A man with small or no income at all, at the bottom of social scale during the Great Depression, and often evoked in movies as a victim of heartless society or irresponsible mostly Republican government.
[8] Got its name after Will Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) at the time.

glorify crimes, criminals and sexual drives, was the most active. "Newsweek magazine reported in early July (1934) that the movement had spread well beyond the Catholic constituency, and no less than 65 million, half the population of the country, were under official church pressure to boycott indecent and un-Christian films" (Schatz 1989: 203). These pressure groups were also aided by many independent theatre owners and exhibitors who had every reason to break the big studios' essentially urban-like or cosmopolitan filmmaking. They felt that their audience, primarily farmers and peasants, couldn't sympathize with struggles of the urban high-class or poor immigrants that settled in big cities. These exhibitors and pressure groups were averse to movie icons of the poor who attempted to reach prominence through illegal and morally compromised ways (e.g., the pre-Code gangster characters Tom Powers from *Public Enemy*, Rico Bandello from *Little Caesar* and Tony Camonte from *Scarface*). To these circumstances Hollywood productions had to adapt.

European exhibitors didn't pose a real threat to Hollywood's filmmaking as much as European governments' possible intervention. This intervention was, from the perspective of European governments, necessary for the reason of defending the image of their country, citizenry and culture. That is why Hollywood maintained, what Ruth Vasey calls, "pragmatic attitude toward details of ethnic representation." (1997: 215) Markets that were less exploited, or those that weren't targeted for the prestige productions[9] which largely depended on foreign revenues, served more for the purpose of comic relief, stereotyping characters or branding them as villains. For example, for the remake of movie *Beau Geste* (1939), the villains of the silent version (1926) were changed from an Italian and Belgian (Boldini and Lejeune) to Russians (Rasinoff and Markoff), as the Russian market was less profitable than the ones in the western Europe. After the instalment of the Hays Code, the filmmakers generally avoided dealing with plights and possible misery at home front. They also avoided any cautionary tales that could inflame the public. In this regard, the big studios brought into play "mythical kingdoms" and exotic locations. Far-fetched mythical kingdoms that kept away from portraying actual nations or people (e.g., Freedonia in *Duck Soup* and Marshovia in *The Merry Widow*) and exotic places (or sometimes unspecified countries or towns) that attempted to minimize the political controversy that a topic could raise (e.g., *Mutiny on the Bounty*, *Dodsworth*, *Only Angels Have*

[9] Prestige pictures were focal point of Hollywood's cultural articulation. They demanded big budgets, the best crew available and effectual advertisement. First-run in cinemas was guaranteed, thus making it an event that every American should attend (e.g., the Atlanta premiere of Gone with the Wind). These movies were often synonymous with history. Their main goal was to give a major socio-political commentary, which makes them the perfect tool in determining the Hollywood industry's role in the advancement of desirable values.

Wings, *Blockade* and *Idiot's Delight*), were evidence to Hollywood's proclivity for pragmatic ethnic representation. Essentially, the Production Code was drawn to distance spectators from political and social reality. The Code's executors, led by a very charismatic and strong-willed Irish Catholic Joseph Breen, put a great deal of effort to sustain political status quo, at the time predominantly isolationist. They wanted to keep the American public as far as possible from taking interest in local, national and foreign politics. Politically charged movies that would contest corrupting power of fascist urges and directly oppose the customs of European fascism were unwelcome. Only a handful were produced during Roosevelt's first term (e.g., *Gabriel over the White House* in 1933 and *The President Vanishes* in 1934)[10] and none of them enjoyed any real box office or critical popularity. The censors and Will Hays were furious at these grim and disrespectful pictures because, as one reviewer in a Nazi newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter* explained, they "made fun of democracy and the inefficiency of the parliamentary system." (Urwand 2013: 108) As time passed, the Breen's office, and even the studio heads' rhetoric, changed from the first year of operation to 1939 significantly. They were welcoming new ideas concerning subject matters, willing to openly discuss with filmmakers on matters they would reject earlier. In his annual report from March 1939, Will Hays has stated "support for pictures which dramatized present-day social conditions." (Balio 1993: 70) A tide towards freedom of screen was no wonder. Hollywood had once again the aspiration to change its production trends due to domestic activism (emergence of stronger Popular Front tendencies, formation of actors, screenwriters and directors' guilds, fame and independence that certain filmmakers, like Charlie Chaplin and Frank Capra, attained, and the influence of German exiled artists) and foreign situation (the German market was being shut down for Hollywood, others, like the Great Britain's, had to be exploited more). Just as the decade ended, three distinct and first-run pictures that would address vital internal and external political issues reached the American screens: Preston Sturgess made *The Great McGinty* (1940), in which he would explore the nature of political corruption and propaganda in a cynical manner; Charlie Chaplin made *The Great Dictator* (1940), humanist work which would show the suffering of the people in Europe and the dehumanizing effects of totalitarian savagery; Orson Welles and Herman Mankiewicz

[10] Both movies were produced by independent movie producers which made them less attractive to many exhibitors. *Gabriel over the White House* (1933) was produced by William Randolph Hearst, a newspaper mogul and one of the most influential and wealthiest Americans, and his own company, Cosmopolitan Pictures. It tried to promote the idea of an iron and enlightened leader at the expense of eliminating civic liberties (president's "a life for a life" philosophy against his enemies). *The President Vanishes* (1934) was produced by Walter Wanger, a producer who would soon become well-known for his provocative and politically conscious message pictures that brought into play anti-fascism. This movie tried to, in the realm of a political thriller story, uncover the warmongering nature of certain malicious plutocrats.

created *Citizen Kane* (1941), a controversial work that would dramatize a grand real-life American political magnate (the protagonist, Charles Foster Kane, being the exact image of William Randolph Hearst), in a "failure story that would show the protagonist retreating from democracy which his money fails to buy and his power fails to control."[11]

What connected the Code to the New Deal values is the idea that an individual might be corrupt, but not an institution. The irrepressible optimism was likewise recognizable in the set of values promoted by the Code and New Deal. The biggest resistance to the Hays Code and Breen Office came from screenwriters who were attracted to stories of injustice (present-day topics, like mob lynching and slum conditions) and from ruggedly independent producers like Sam Goldwyn, David O. Selznick and Walter Wanger, each protecting their investments and distinctive, often against the tide, socio-political perspective. These producers had to, each time the negotiation with the Breen's office didn't go as planned, cancel their project, usually under the guise of "casting difficulties". Screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz commented on the strictures put on the writers: "The hero and the heroine must be virgins. The villain can lay anybody he wants, have as much fun as he wants cheating and stealing, getting rich and whipping servants. But you have to shoot him in the end." (Leff, Simmons 2001: 46) Sometimes Breen acted as a "moral mediator", by providing creative input in the most delicate situations. In this regard, his creative input occasionally included priest figures. They were classless authoritative figures who operated within the existing system, which made them the perfect ideological, socializing and reform force. By way of illustration, Father Dolan in Lang's *You Only Live Once* (1937) is trying to redeem an ex-convict, Father Connolly in Curtiz's *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938) is trying to save and socialize delinquents who are worshiping a gangster and Father Griffith in Ford's *How Green Was My Valley* (1941) is working on reconciling the opposing set of values, traditional and patriarchal with modern and reformist. Perfect example of Breen's unflinching moral guidance is his suggestion for the movie *San Francisco* (1936), MGM's biggest grosser of the year and a prestige picture. Crucial for the story's dichotomy development between a priest (Spencer Tracy) and a harsh, ruthless, boyhood friend of his, but a fierce competitor (Clark Gable), Breen proposed a scene that would come before the one where Gable knocks down Tracy, that the director and screenwriters didn't have in mind: "an earlier scene to be inserted to show the priest out-fighting Blackie in a boxing match. If the clergyman accepts the blow with humility and doesn't strike back, you've got

[11] https://catalog.afi.com/Film/27624-CITIZEN-KANE?sid=37e92b80-846c-4c5b-8ed8-467ca8eed208&sr=27.251925&cp=1&pos=0 (Last retrieved on 4th of September 2023).

excellent drama." (Doherty 2007: 111) The scene wonderfully emphasized the priest's moral attitude of turning the other cheek, thus giving the audience a prime example of Catholic tolerance helping a misguided soul.

The censorship in the form of the Hays Code confirmed the power and monopoly of the major studios. This practical censorship defended their business leading by restricting the production of films dealing with controversial themes, which they feared could lead to a flood of films with strong social agenda. Before the Code, there was a fear that small, independent productions would continue to feed on sensationalism of their subjects which would attract the audience more than any fictional story. After the Code, the risk was minimal. The Code's adoption also meant that Hollywood productions would obtain a more standardized form of production. Standardization dominated over innovation. In each studio unit productions were being formed. The ones that got the most acclaim set new trends, which then dominated the box office and critic awards (e.g., backstage musicals Warner Bros.-Berkeley, biopics Dieterle-Muni, populist drama-comedies Capra-Riskin-Cooper-Stewart and adventure/swashbuckler[12] Curtiz-Flynn collaboration). The new trends followed the official New Deal policy of taming the corrupted influences and patriotic celebration of tolerant and noble heroes. With "musts and mustn'ts" meticulously ordained (this category of actions first introduced back in 1930), producers knew in advance how to shape the story they were "selling". In many instances, producers, directors or writers had to be extremely resourceful to overcome Breen's, what they saw as petty, complaints. One strategy dealing with Breen was described by screenwriter Donald Ogden Stewart: "I used always to write three or four scenes which I knew would be thrown out, in order that we could bargain with Breen for the retention of other really important episodes or speeches" (Doherty 2007: 114). Much was written about the Hays Code as a form of Hollywood's self-censorship. The intention behind the Code was to save Hollywood from political interference. The moguls were afraid of federal regulations being imposed upon them. This is an important proof of Hollywood's conformism, which would explain why many movies with a political statement were under various pressures.

Additionally, the creation of the Production Code is a testament to the cultural role Hollywood played in everyday life of all Americans. High-budgeted literary adaptations, many of them centring around child star, that could fascinate audiences of all ages (e.g., *The Wizard of Oz* with Judy Garland and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Mickey Rooney), were a means

[12] An adventure film characterized by swordfight, usually set in the Mediaeval Europe and following the exploits of an outlaw or social bandit who fights against tyrannical rulers.

to promote good moral character. Other literary works were approved by the Hays Office because they were respectable and inoffensive (e.g., *Little Women*, *David Copperfield* and *Alice in the Wonderland*). As Mark Wheeler highlights, "throughout the second half of the 1930s, the Hays Office passed those films which showed sufficient decorum, restraint and conformity." (2006: 59) Wheeler extends his argument by focusing on different outfits that the Hays office prescribed for Maureen O'Sullivan in *Tarzan* (1932), Betty Boop in her cartoons, Clark Gable after showing his bare chest in *It Happened One Night* (1934), and shameless, impure females in De Mille's extravagant historical epics. This work will, on the other hand, focus on political censorship. Hollywood was careful not to offend citizens of foreign countries or to create riots at home that would inspire domestic pressure groups to act. Because Hollywood depended on global distribution, it had to satisfy their international customers. In most cases those customers were foreign governments who sometimes, as in the 1930s Nazi Germany, imposed quotas on number of foreign movies distributed in their cinemas. For example, many countries disapproved of gangster pictures and horror movies in the 1930s. Their production definitely suffered due to these restrictions. Apart from imposing quotas, foreign governments, especially the German, with its dedicated Nazi diplomat in Los Angeles Georg Gyssling, would generate significant pressure on politically-conscious producers and writers for their anti-fascist propaganda.

3. Production trends as determinators of social values

Movie production encompasses all visible and invisible aspects of filmmaking: from story selection, time period and location, to what kind of a star persona will be utilized by its main creative force (in the Hollywood studio system usually the producer, sometimes the screenwriter or director). Trends in the Hollywood productions were changing rapidly during the Golden Age Period (1927-1968). When a studio found a successful formula and when they have gotten the needed affirmation from the audience (measured primarily in the box office success), they stuck to it relentlessly. Hollywood in the 1930s moved definitely in position of cultural dominance, leaving behind the press and radio. During the Silent era, Hollywood gained favourable position in fashioning values that the society would recognize as valid and necessary for them to "imitate" (e.g., Clara Bow's "It girl" or Douglas Fairbanks' "Everybody's hero" public persona). Yet, it appeared in the headlines more because of the wild life their favourite leading men and women lead. The obscenities and controversies that their private

lives were full of, made Hollywood the epitome of unrestrained American Dream. This view on the American Dream continued throughout the first years of the sound era. Later, it became more and more elusive. During the 1930s, president Hoover's ill-fated announcement that "prosperity is just around the corner" was being ridiculed. The individual economic prosperity that Hoover's administration was determined to renew, was now out-dated as a mode of action. Communal prosperity, with roots in small-town America, was the new goal to pursue. The American Dream was being replaced by a populist dream for justice, democratic ideal and personal integrity. Also, as Peter Stead asserts, Hollywood in the 1930s "took on a more highly integrated personality". (1989: 46) Each studio constructed its own identity and had a "personality" of its own. In many cases, as Leo Rosten points out, this personality "may be traced to its producers, for they are the ones who establish the preferences, the prejudices, and the predispositions of the organization." (Schatz 1989: 7) The studio system represented almost all Hollywood feature-length output and the producers illustrated what Hollywood stood for during the 1930s. The studio bosses were mostly first- or second-generation Americans, many of them Jew émigrés from Eastern Europe. This fact played an enormous role in their creative output. Many of them were afraid of being rejected by their peers and audience, or, even worse, being stigmatized as foreigners who disapprove the American way of life. As a result, they decided to keep their origins a secret. The movies would avoid alluding to different ethnicities, especially Jewish. Thereafter, nobody could accuse them of working against America's interests. As their film preferences show, they were anxious to prove the public they are genuine American patriots.

3.1. Studio identities: MGM and Warner Bros. leading the way

The MGM studio, as the financially strongest, was the leading studio in providing reassurance of American values. Of all the studios, it took the most pleasure in supplying Americans with the necessary doses of sentimentalism and idealism. Both business and personal convictions lead the studio to "sanctify" the dictum that the sentimental Americans can be sufficed with outstanding artifice without offending anyone. Its owner and chief producer, Louis B. Mayer, was notorious for his "flag-waving" love of his adoptive country (Mayer celebrated his birthday on 4th July). Consequently, MGM's patriotism was related to the native-born wealth. Mayer offered the Depression-era audience an antidote to hopelessness and despair. His favourite films were brimming with optimism and heralded everything that

was right with America. He created an updated Victorian world where anything was possible, so long as one subscribed to what he viewed as "the Holy Trinity of American life: Family, God, and Country." (Ross 2011: 82) This world can be boiled down to honouring values which must secure family unity. At the beginning of the decade, MGM's style was associated mostly with glamour and the life of the rich. As the decade progressed, lavishness began to make place for new production trends, and as Izod argues, "alternating between the unrealistically classy and the idealistically folksy." (1988: 88) However, some of the most culturally significant high-cost "unrealistically classy" pictures, such as *Marie Antoinette* (1938), *Parnell* (1937) and *The Great Waltz* (1938), were for many small-town Americans valueless and time-consuming. Therefore, MGM developed production units that would produce pictures that would prove that the true America is the one devoid of injustices, where good moral character serves not just as a means for personal fulfilment or accomplishments, but is the ultimate goal. From today's point of view, those pictures, especially the Andy Hardy cycle[13], Mayer's personal favourite, are hailed as prime examples of middle-class conformism, just as Brown confirms: "the family was strongly patriarchal, centring mainly on the communication of wisdom and experience," from father to son. (2010: 95)

On the other spectrum of Mayer's "Holy Trinity", resided a studio that congratulated itself on "Good Citizenship and Good Pictures". Warner Brothers was studio unlike any other in terms of business practices. Author Steven J. Ross describes their aim of filmmaking as "to expose what was wrong in American life: poverty, corruption, lack of opportunity." (2011: 82) What made Warners' pictures more reflexive on the present-day issues was the fact that they found "cheap" (in terms of obtaining rights to it) topical subjects, literally torn from newspapers headlines. The audience wasn't alien to the issue. They came to see the movie with some knowledge and already formed opinions. This strategy was used in the pre-Code era films, with biggest hits like *Public Enemy* (1931), *Little Caesar* (1931), *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (1932) and *Scarface* (1932) inspired by real stories, of gangsters' rise and fall and convicted men, that every American could have read or heard of. The Warner Brothers continued with the same business after the admittance of the Code, enriching their output with topics from newspapers such as strikes, lynching or cruel treatments of immigrants. Their products had a low-brow value, street-wise quality and language more in tune with the American everyday life. They championed the outlaw as a real patriot (social bandits from adventure movies, like

[13] The Andy Hardy (starring Mickey Rooney) movies, starting from the first picture *A Family Affair* (1937), were extremely financially successful B-movies. The audience definitely enjoyed the small-town cliches that the movies were full of: from pleasant and complacent housewives to sharp-witted, yet sensitive, paterfamilias.

Robin Hood) more than any other studio. They were the most fervent Roosevelt's supporters among movie community, evident in their first movies after Roosevelt's inauguration (see chapter 9 where *Footlight Parade* and *42nd Street* are dealt with). They were also politically the most active studio chiefs. In his discussion on Anglo-American propaganda filmmaking, Todd Bennett remarks that "the Warners' political stance owed much to their close relationship with the White House. Widely known as "the Roosevelt studio, the Warner Bros. supported the administration's foreign and domestic policies more openly than any other firm." (2002: 76) Studio's usual directors (e.g., Wiliam Dieterle, Michael Curtiz), stars (e.g., Paul Muni, Edward G. Robinson), and even Jack and Harry Warner themselves, were sympathizers of the Popular Front agenda[14] more than any other Hollywood studio. This will result in anti-fascism as focal point of political activity (on-screen and off-screen) and interventionism as an offered solution to the evil world designs. The Warners studio's social awareness even predated that of Roosevelt's government, with their early 1930s works focusing on incapacity of the society and institutions to resolve issue of gangsterism. After Roosevelt's inauguration, the Warners reflected the strengths of the New Deal. They, followed by other studios, resolved the issue of gangsterism by converting the gangster, as Balio vividly describes, "from public enemy number one, to public hero number one." (1993: 290) James Cagney and Edward G. Robinson, who previously played unscrupulous gangsters, now played benevolent federal government figures, or G-men (government men, usually FBI men), in movies such as *G Men* (1935) and *Bullets or Ballots* (1936). Moreover, the Warners maintained faith in the America's institutions. Movies such as aforementioned *Heroes for Sale* (1933) and *Wild Boys of the Road* (1933), although at first glance despairing (some authors claim it to be still in tune with the Warners' Pre-Code acid realism), proved that American judiciary and presidential rhetoric can benefit at least spiritual lives of those maltreated.

The rest of the eight big studios (Paramount, RKO, Twentieth Century-Fox, United Artist, Universal and Columbia) had a less polished aesthetic style. The organizations behind those studios usually didn't take a firmer stands regarding perplexing national or international situation (some exceptions like Daryl Zanuck will be evaluated). The social values imprinted in their movies were less recognizable. Even when they exhibited certain stylization practices, usually it had no real social relevance. For example, the Paramount studio had usually put to screen idealized worlds that would imitate the sophistication and classiness seen in the biggest

[14] The Popular Front agenda heralded a change in the US politics, as many progressive film artists wanted to address the issues of disenfranchisement, unemployment, demagoguery and fascism, something inconceivable for the non-political 1920s Hollywood community.

European metropolises (Paris being the ultimate inspiration). Those movies were usually marketed as escapist entertainment. In this sense, some of the Paramount's most lucrative directors were European directors (e.g., Ernst Lubitsch and Josef von Sternberg) who, as Gabler suggests, "whisked the audience away to a world of sheen and sex where people spoke in innuendo, acted with abandon, and doubted the rewards of virtue." (1988: 204). Even at times very successful Twentieth Century-Fox's sentimental melodramas and quasi-historical love stories (e.g., *Cardinal Richelieu*, 1935 and *The Story of Alexandar Graham Bell*, 1939), made up romantic subplots and gave their historical figures historically unfounded personal motivations just to sell the movies more easily. The aesthetic style and ethos of all of the rest big studios was increasingly scattered. It would be an overstatement to say that any of these studios followed singular ideological perspective. Generally speaking, during the Golden Age, Hollywood has been attempting to appeal to the greatest number of audiences. As such, the key was to avoid offending anyone, which resulted in an ideologically more cohesive output. The closest the studios got to a common ideological agenda was the moral clarity regarding the celebration of traditional gender roles, family and youth.

3.2. Changes in "script laboratories" – sound-era Hollywood writers

The Hollywood cinema was character-driven cinema, oriented toward the destiny of its protagonist. The story and the potential message were always subordinate to the main character. The protagonist's fate is what was remembered. That was the starting point for the most of the Hollywood productions. Main job of the screenwriter was to create movie vehicles for a star. The MGM studio was best at it (e.g., always chaste Jeannette MacDonald, elusive Garbo and resilient Gable). Accordingly, the screenwriter had to be conscious of the star's idiosyncratic traits and incorporate them into the characterization. An important rule was that the protagonist couldn't be killed, which the audience knew perfectly well. When Capra and Riskin were filming *Meet John Doe* in 1941, they filmed more than one version of ending. Capra was most satisfied with one having Gary Cooper's character killed (suicide), but as he later claimed "you just can't kill Gary Cooper." (Neve 1992: 50) Another risky decision was going against typecasting. Miscasting of a star could ruin a potentially far-reaching film (e.g., Gable as Parnell in 1937). On the other hand, off-casting of a star could educate and inspire the audience, as

casting of Errol Flynn "secured the identification of the outlaw in the Wild West with the outlaw in times of the British Empire." (Slotkin 1998: 287)

Screenwriters in the 1930s Hollywood provided a unique ideological impetus. During the 1930s, Hollywood recruited many well-known and accomplished Broadway playwrights and novelists. Whereas novelists, such as John Steinbeck, Sinclair Lewis, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner, haven't succeeded in influencing mainstream Hollywood filmmaking through their more ambitious cinematic projects and New Deal political views[15] in a way they wanted, the playwrights managed to turn into films some of their pivotal works. Those who enjoyed enormous popularity back in New York contributed to Hollywood's more issue-oriented or socially aware output. They worked against Hollywood's dominantly low-brow inclinations, which was apparent in works of a group of authors who thrived in Hollywood during the beginning of the talkies: journalists and newspapermen. The journalists, as Fawell precisely puts it, "had a better feel for the energetic rhythms and populist feel of Hollywood," which were selling immensely during the 1930s. (2008: 167) These writers, most famous among them being Billy Wilder, Dudley Nichols, Charles MacArthur, Ben Hecht and Charles Brackett, didn't show much aspiration for socially-engaged works. However, even their works weren't completely devoid of reality or mere escapist distractions. For example, Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett, who collaborated on numerous film projects, have written, amongst other works, one of the most unique pictures of the 1930s, political satire *Ninotchka* (1939). The movie brought together two German immigrants, screenwriter Wilder and director Lubitsch, in a populist attempt to defend Americanism and show the necessity of softening communist dogma. The decision to play Garbo as a grim and excessively dogmatic Soviet agent who will acquire humanity and sense of humour reveals that screenwriters like Billy Wilder and Charles Brackett were a force who could combine "the populist feel of Hollywood" and political advocacy.

Broadway playwrights (some of them continued to produce for both the cinema and theatre) like Donald Ogden Stewart, Robert E. Sherwood and Lillian Hellman, were the biggest threat to the Code-era Hollywood. Their work consisted of some very sensitive subjects (from conditions in urban slums to political corruption). Some of their most infamous works were deemed as political propaganda pieces, due to the discovery, as Neve put it in his description of Stewart's contribution in raising the public awareness during the mid-1930s, of the

[15] The obvious exception is Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (to some extent and the movie adaptations of his *Of Mice and Men*). This American movie classic succeeded in raising awareness on some severe social issues.

"oppressed, the unemployed, the hungry, the sharecropper, the Jew under Hitler, the Negro." (1992: 4) They offered a reversal of popular values. As *Variety* wrote about *Dead End* (1937; William Wyler directed from a Lillian Hellman script), something that the public would assume to be a "gangster saga", was turned into a propaganda piece with little regard for entertainment, to thematize that "tenements breed gangsters, and no one does anything about it." (Leff, Simmons 2001: 78) These screenwriters had a lot of trouble with Breen's censorship. For example, Hellman's play and script for *Dead End* (1937), had to be carefully shaped to stay within the regulations. The gangster, Martin "Baby Face" (fittingly played by Humphrey Bogart) is contentedly reduced to a sad figure who yearns for maternal love (and all he gets in return is the Code's, i.e. his mother's, slap in the face), and Drina, the heroine who has to look after her younger brother who is on the brink of becoming the new Martin, is raised to a figure of a surrogate mother and proponent of social activism. The works of such screenwriters was the closest Hollywood in the 1930s got to social realism or even agit-prop. Apart from attempting to shape the American public opinion, they were politically active, seeking to get involved in domestic and foreign politics (e.g., the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, League of American Writers and Screen Writers Guild).

4. Star type as determinators of social values

4.1. New male and female values

One way to track the changes in social values and public appeal is to look at the movie stars and the popularity they generate in certain age. In the 1920s, popular were exotic, playful and remote Douglas Fairbanks, Rudolph Valentino, Pola Negri and Clara Bow, but during the 1930 they had to make place for the girl/boy next door, embodied perfectly by James Stewart, Jean Arthur, Myrna Loy, Spencer Tracy or Gary Cooper. In the pre-Code period, Greta Garbo, Mae West and Marlene Dietrich have enjoyed grand success. Garbo's spiritual eroticism, Mae West's shameless exploitation of women libido and Dietrich's adulterous behaviour, were far from the new expectations of the New Deal cinema. These actresses were essentially outcasted from the mid-1930s. Sometimes they were being ridiculed, directly or indirectly, in movies to follow. For example, Janet Gaynor's snobbish impersonations of Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich in *A Star is Born* (1937), a success story that is the ultimate personification of the truly pioneering "American Way" where an underdog (Janet Gaynor, an ordinary, gentle and delicate

gal) conquers Hollywood wilderness, show how outcasted those performers are from the mid-1930s. One incident is illustrative of the new demands in Hollywood, the infamous box office poison ad from 1938. The Independent Theatre Owners Association accused many actors and actresses, alongside their studios for playing them, for becoming "a box office nil". The bulletin has included many household names, like Greta Garbo, Mae West, Fred Astaire, Luisa Rainer, Edward Arnold, Joan Crawford, Marlene Dietrich, Katharine Hepburn and Kay Francis. The same exhibitors' "box office poison" ad "had lauded the success of the cheaply produced Charlie Chan and Mr. Moto films, as well as the Jones and Hardy Family series, and demanded more." (Jurca 2012: 100) Interestingly, although the article was aimed to be seen only by the movie personnel, it got a lot of publicity outside the group, and was heavily featured in the press and many movie reviews of the upcoming movies in which these actors and actresses starred. It was a clear sign that certain star appeal was dead. Glamour and charm weren't paying off. Sophisticated women that were seen breaking with the societal norms and traditional gender roles, like Katharine Hepburn, were also enjoying small popularity. Different female values and aspirations had to be promoted. For instance, Jean Harlow abandoned her image of the "Platinum Blonde" and the "Blonde Bombshell"[16], to become a humble and pleasant American girl. The reviewers in the 1930s tended to understand women's lives to be rooted more in "a world of emotions than in the standard political and economic sectors in which men such as miners, boxers, and fishermen roamed. Thus, they repeatedly inferred that a film like *Stella Dallas* would surely appeal more to females because it was a "tear-jerker" and had "emotional high spots." (Bodnar 2003: 50) In *Stella Dallas* (1937), the titular protagonist, played by once a gold-digger star persona but now a caring girl-next-door Barbara Stanwyck, is a loving mother, but one whose poor origins and vulgar demeanour (the way she dresses, acts and speaks) alienate her, first from her husband and then from her daughter. To make sure her daughter receives the right kind of class education, middle-class and not working-class, she will at the end of the movie do the unthinkable. Stella will pretend to despise the idea that she has to care for her teenage daughter and will reject her, under the pretence that she wants to escape with her new boyfriend to South America. She leaves her to her ex-husband and his new, proper and conventional, family. The last scene, shows Stella behind garden bars, and not in South America, looking at her daughter's new family, as she tries to hide her enormous sadness.

[16] Harlow's star image is credited to be created by Howard Hughes for immensely popular *Hell's Angels* (1930). The star image became even more alluring to female audience all over America as Harlow bleached her hair for a title role in Capra's movie *Platinum Blonde* (1931). However, using "sex as currency" was to be stopped by opting for the New Deal cinema.

Image from *Stella Dallas* (1937)[17]

Thus, from commercial point of view, pictures like *Stella Dallas* (1937) were often referred to as "weepies", and it even created another niche, that of "women's film". These films encouraged women to preserve their marriages, or to find for themselves a happy home. They were usually stories of marital and maternal sacrifices (*Stella Dallas, Kitty Foyle, Little Women, The Women, Gone with the Wind, Jezebel*). Even when the heroines exhibited strong independency, nonconformism and behaved rebelliously, such as Scarlett O'Hara (Vivien Leigh/*Gone with the Wind*) or Julie Marsden (Bette Davis/*Jezebel*), they were unfulfilled and asked for redemption through love or sense of belonging (to a family, place or community). In the screwball comedies of the 1930s[18], the women who seek independence, realize marrying is the right course of action (e.g., *It Happened One Night*, *My Man Godfrey*, *Nothing Sacred*, *Philadelphia Story*). The heroines of the more outrageous and unscrupulous screwball comedies of remarriage, likewise realize that by separating from their partners they would lose the only real companion who can help them to understand their fundamental human qualities (*The Awful Truth* and *His Girl Friday*). Even Norma Shearer as *Marie Antoinette* (1938) is more of a loving woman, mother and wife than a queen in one of the most important events in the human history (the French Revolution). Woman has to be, in words of Fran Dodsworth (from Wyler's movie *Dodsworth* in 1936), "dutiful wife, devoted mother and a citizen of her community," or as Smedley points out on female values, "such values emphasized compassion, sharing, sacrifice, social justice and community help." (2011: 23) Sometimes their task was more to motivate their husbands, than an actual community help. In the Warners Brothers' popular historical biopics

[17] Stella Dallas (Barbara Stanwyck) at the end of the movie, mourning outside of her daughter's new home having to leave her to the right kind of influence.

[18] Screwball comedies were light-hearted, but fast-paced romantic comedies that were usually reconciling men and women of different social class, origin and lifestyle. The heroines transformed from selfish and zany socialites, and heroes from stiff and prideful hypocrites, to proper and responsible family members. The genre affirmed the couple as the main constituent of society and cooperation as the golden rule.

(especially Emile Zola and Louis Pasteur), women's contribution to society was assessed by how much were they ready to sacrifice their personal fulfilment to provide their husbands with the necessary help. In essence, women's role was to hold the men emotionally together.

The stars must be, in Hollywood terms, personifications of their roles. In the 1930s it became advisable for actors and actresses to be seen in public, spending time with their families. The public approved:

> "...more of, "the Myrna Loys and Gary Coopers and Sonja Henies," names that were among the top-ten big-money stars in the poll of 1937. Their appeal, along with that of Shirley Temple, Clark Gable, Robert Taylor (the top three in the Herald's poll), and other ranking favourites, was that "they are human, understandable, co-operative, and kind." There was nothing standoffish about them; they are all "regular fellows," "your kind of folks, and mine." (Jurca 2012: 107)

These "regular fellows" were the backbone of new production trends. They were featured under various guises in different crucial movie trends ("little man" of Capra's universe the most famous and successful) that made sure the audience got its dosage of democratic faith.

During the pre-Code, another type of movie stars was popular, the "tough guy". In describing the type, Patrick McGilligan's said of Cagney's "tough guy" screen persona: "At worst, Cagney presents the liberal guise of fascist instincts: the drive to be on top, to go solo, to dominate women, to buy one hundred suits, to succeed - the competitive, individualist, capitalist ethic." (Dyer 1998: 49) This "tough guy" character, which the PCA (Production Code Administration) was determined to eradicate because they pigeonholed him as a parasite of modern society, couldn't survive in the new type of cinema where good neighbourliness and hard-work were key to personal and communal success.

Change of trajectory in Clark Gable's career was also suggestive of the change in the conception of hero in new popular genre formulas. As May concludes, from a "tough-guy style, gangster whose dark appearance matched the underground (in *Manhattan Melodrama* his character is named Blackie) …to a romantic gunrunner in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), rebellious officer in *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935), comic newspaperman in *It Happened One Night* (1934)." (2000: 86) To these new roles of the most popular male star of the mid and late 1930s, three more appearances should be added as examples of high moral values that Gable hero must manifest: in the prestigious (and a box office hit) musical-drama *San Francisco* (1936), in the bio-pic (and a box office disappointment) *Parnell* (1937) and in the war-drama (and a minor box office setback) *Idiot's Delight* (1939). After *Manhattan Melodrama* and his role as gangster

Edward J. "Blackie", in *San Francisco* (1936) Gable played a shady owner of a bar, once again named "Blackie" (Norton), but this time saved and redeemed from his miserable life choices by two figures: virginal music diva, played by Jeannette MacDonald, and childhood friend, now priest, played by Spencer Tracy. At the end of the movie, in the aftermath of the earthquake that hit San Francisco in 1905, Gable's character Blackie joins his spiritual redeemer Mary (MacDonald) and other citizens in singing "Battle Hymn of the Republic", something earlier inconceivable for Gable. On the other hand, two later Gable projects, *Parnell* (1937) and *Idiot's Delight* (1939), were proof that Hollywood and its biggest talent weren't immune to the new production trends and political regrouping. Both movies will serve as prime examples of social values in "grand man" bio-pics and interventionist angle in politically charged movies.

Even Douglas Fairbanks look-a-like, Errol Flynn, the new 1930s Warners' star, owed his popularity to his professed loyalties as an outlaw and social bandit as much as to the action-packed and romantic sequences in adventures or swashbucklers (*Captain Blood, The Charge of the Light Brigade, The Adventures of Robin Hood, The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex, The Sea Hawk*) and newly launched A-westerns (*Dodge City, Virginia City, Santa Fe Trail*). Many films of the 1920s, especially adventures and costume dramas, were set in the distant and fantastic past where, as Faucette correctly assesses, "screen heroes like Fairbanks, Valentino, and Barrymore (alongside Lon Chaney, the most popular male actors of the Silent era) were shown to be men whose success was located within fidelity to their own self-interest." (2010: 38) In this sense, Fairbanks performance was centred around his athleticism and robust masculinity, through which he was seeking personal triumph. His successor, Flynn, couldn't prosper in that kind of environment. Flynn needed strong moral conviction to use force. He wasn't using his strength and wits to promote himself. The heroes he played were men of principles who were politically motivated to act. They always acted in New-Deal-like fashion, helping those who cannot help themselves. The rugged individualism typical of the 1920s male heroes was through Flynn's characters replaced with gallant social activism.

Many actors were, just like writers, drawn from Broadway stage to Hollywood at the beginning of the sound era. This meant that allusions to real-life problems in American society and politics should appear more often in the 1930s movies. Broadway plays predated what Hollywood didn't have the courage to address. Paul Muni's success during the 1930s is a prime example of a great Broadway actor making necessary and vigorous social statements via film characters, and being at that memorable, recognizable and celebrated (the box office success, press exposure and awards, by the critics and Academy). People started associating him with

the social-issue pictures, making him first the hero of disempowered (Johnny Ramirez in *Bordertown*, Joe Radek in *Black Fury* and Wang Lung in *The Good Earth*), and then in his illustrious biopic performances the hero of all mankind (Louis Pasteur, Emile Zola and Juarez). As Dickstein puts it, Muni's biographical roles were "more than stories of Great Man as a mover of History, practices of personalizing the past into shining models of individual courage, willpower and charisma." (2009: 345) Muni's artistical approach to these movie roles was well-known all over America, and hence gave the audience the impression of relevancy to present-day situation. As shown, all these new characters played by James Cagney, Clark Gable, Errol Flynn and Paul Muni wouldn't sacrifice their integrity for material gain. The sense of delight in everyday moments, as well as resilience and resourcefulness in poverty-stricken or politically-corrupted worlds were the values that these heroes encouraged.

4.2. Child stars

Child actors were never before or after as popular as in these years of the Golden Age period. During the Code-era and before the WWII, images of youthful heroes dominated the screen whenever and wherever they appeared. Many Hollywood studios created film series with generic plots developing around its child star (e.g., MGM exploiting Mickey Rooney for *The Hardy Series* or Universal exploiting Deanna Durbin). Even more, the studios were exploiting the charm of their child star in adaptations of literary classics (*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, David Copperfield, Captains Courageous, The Wizard of Oz*). These youthful heroes functioned as a powerful and countervailing force against the Great Depression's anxiety. They desired to restore the traditional order. They were celebrating youth and family, and at times not real but surrogate families. In *Captains Courageous* (1937), MGM's financially successful Rudyard Kipling adaptation, a boy named Harvey (Freddie Bartholomew) acquires a surrogate father, fisherman Manuel (Spencer Tracy) who teaches him the values of cooperation, kindness, and, in general, how to lead a happy life. In *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), Dorothy (Judy Garland) learns simple virtues of agrarian life through a surrogate family far from home, over the rainbow, in a dream sequence. In the updated version of Frank Baum's 1900 book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, MGM made most of the Great Depression concerns (longing for security), the New Deal values (allegiance to family and collective effort) and child-star power.

> "From the mid-1930s, the box office was topped by male stars, along with adolescent and child actors. The appeal of American traditional values is evident if we consider the

> major trends in moviegoing and public taste. Shirley Temple had a triumphant career and topped the box office for four straight years, from 1935 to 1938. In those same seasons, the virile Clark Gable was the most successful male star and was ranked second behind Temple. The most popular genres were adventure films – a typical male genre– and costume dramas, while another male genre – the biopic – was highly praised by critics and a favourite at the Oscars" (Lucia 2015: 258)

As confirmed by the excerpt above, Shirley Temple led the way in public appeal. She acted as "a firm figure of optimism," just as the New Deal encouraged, and she never failed to "transform the lives of people around her through sheer force of goodness." (Brown 2010: 87) This is best exemplified in her most noted appearance, *The Littlest Rebel* (1935). It is a story of a Southern girl, played by Temple, who at the end of the movie rescues her captured father (arrested by Yankee soldiers and to be executed) by pleading her case to Abraham Lincoln.

Image from *The Littlest Rebel* (1935)[19]

Template of a Shirley movie is established in her first appearances and follows its natural course throughout the decade. Shirley movie is oriented toward "gathering as many adoring father figures as she can and then sitting them down to have a stern talking to about ridiculous things…" (Hark 2007: 159) When all characters satisfy their "family roles" (especially fathers, because, after all, patriarchal order ensures peace in these worlds) and when they gain an understanding of real values, only then can the narrative reach its cheerful, light-hearted and absolute conclusion. And these "real values" are, in terms of Temple's movies, all linked to all-embracing humanity, that even transcends racial or ethnic differences (e.g., Indian and British soldiers in *Wee Willie Winkie*), linking her once again to the New Deal cinema and

[19] In tune with very popular, populist trend of resurging America's most beloved president. Shirley Temple and Abraham Lincoln reconciling the North and the South. Temple draws a petition which makes its way to Lincoln, who will at the end fix everything.

the importance of national unity. Temple, alongside Freddie Bartholomew, and occasionally Jackie Cooper, Deanna Durbin, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, worked to moderate intolerance where prejudices were ruining relationships among family members. All things considered, they worked to reinforce and sanctify the middle-class ideal of stable home life.

5. Family films – home and humanity

The Catholic reworking of the Production Code was felt in these child-star flicks, as well as in the movies where the family is a strong social power. The value of unity was crucial for most Hollywood's productions of the period, mirroring Roosevelt's cry at the beginning of his first term for "interdependence and cooperation". For example, *Little Women* (1933), a movie that set a template for the following family-friendly literary adaptations, emphasized "family values and unity in time of social fragmentation." (Brown: 2010: 76) *Little Women* (1933) is set after the American Civil War and chronicles the lives of four sisters, whose father still hadn't returned from the war. The four March sisters work for the benefit of the entire family, balancing their individual creative force and personal dreams with the "love-thy-neighbour" philosophy. The episode during which they provide a Christmas breakfast to a poor family, shows what kind of morals should be selling nowadays. Well-bred daughters can make a difference in a small community's burdensome course of life. Like many prestige productions, of either literary classics or historical subjects, the movie reflects the anxieties people felt during the Great Depression. Another prestigious literary adaptation exemplifies this strong belief in the stability of family: Selznick's MGM production of Dickens' classic *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935). As author Stevens acknowledges, "the family in the film is the site of forgiveness and personal salvation, feminine solicitude and child-like innocence that redeems a few from the fated destruction attending the (French) Revolution." (2006: 188) The protagonist, Sydney Carton (Ronald Colman), a cynical and drunkard English lawyer, gets liberated from his unfulfilling and self-destructive lifestyle when he proves to be willing to risk personal ruin (ends under the guillotine) to protect a misfortunate family. Only when Carton meets the most human of them all, God-fearing Lucie, will he reclaim faith in the goodness of the humanity.

Exhibitors and movie critics usually praised these movies for their "human touch", or "humanity" in general. Exhibitors wanted even more family movies. Even when movies weren't strictly "family movies", but issue-oriented social dramas, historical dramas or biopics, they stressed the significance of family unity. Hollywood had tendency to diminish the sensitive

political and social content in movies, such as in Ford's movies *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), and to make them stories of maternal love, fatherly guidance and family unity. *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) starts with an opening foreword in which Lincoln's mother is asking "what has become of her little boy?" The rest of the movie plays as a potent homage to values Lincoln's mother has embedded in her dear boy. In *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), by making Tom Joad's (Henry Fonda) speech that he'll be wherever there's (social) injustice second-rate (although in the Steinbeck's novel it is the last speech):

> "I'll be all around in the dark – I'll be everywhere. Wherever you can look - wherever there's a fight, so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever there's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there. I'll be in the way guys yell when they're mad. I'll be in the way kids laugh when they're hungry and they know supper's ready, and when the people are eatin' the stuff they raise and livin' in the houses they build – I'll be there, too," (*The Grapes of Wrath*, 1940)

in favour of Ma Joad's less radical speech on perseverance and spiritual strength of a whole class of people: "Rich fellas come up an' they die, an' their kids ain't no good an' they die out. But we keep a'comin'. We're the people that live. They can't wipe us out; they can't lick us. We'll go on forever, Pa, 'cause we're the people," Zanuck (the producer of the movie) has shifted the focus from a serious social issue to a life-affirming message of American people surviving. The young Orson Welles, in Hollywood at the time while making *Citizen Kane*, rightly concluded that by emphasizing Ma's role, Ford had turned *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) from a social document-drama into "a story of mother love." (McBride 2011: 315). In *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), a story of a whole village of Welsh miners, reuniting of Morgan family in Huw's mind is more precious than the rest of his life. In the end the village is destroyed, but its values will live in Huw's approach to life. And as Huw stresses in his voice-over at the beginning of the movie, recalling his life as a boy at the age of 50, "everything I learnt as a small boy came from my father, and I never found anything he ever told me to be wrong or worthless." Stead explains the intention of the movie's creator: "Zanuck had made it clear that he did not want a labour story and so this story of Welsh coal-miners became just a hymn of faith in the American family." (1989: 145)

The need for stronger family ties and stable home life was promoted through many youthful Hollywood heroes. Fatherly guidance is perfectly demonstrated in aforementioned *Captains Courageous* (1937). Harvey (Freddie Bartholomew) learns the value of family by spending time away from home, on a fishing ship where his surrogate and spiritual father, fisherman

Manuel (Spencer Tracy), succeeds in transferring the most important values that his own father taught him, compassion and cooperation, all that is essential "to feel good inside". At the end of the movie, at Manuel's funeral, Harvey and his actual father reconcile, indicative of Roosevelt's announced national unity. Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) also realizes that she will feel good inside only when she discovers how much she is loved by others. Thus, upon her return to the family farm back in Kansas, she concludes, "there's no place like home".

6. "Little man" as the epitome of the 1930s Hollywood populist tradition – the Frank Capra case

"There's no place like home!" utters Ann Sheridan's character in a James Cagney and Michael Curtiz gangster movie *Angels with Dirty Faces* (1938). Her longing is far from Dorothy's, as "home" in urban gangster milieu needed reforming. In the pre-Code Hollywood, cult of gangsters or "tough guys", as described earlier by McGilligan, was in a full swing. But those "celebrities" didn't know of love and family values. They rejected any possible responsibility to the community, law, authority or country. Patriotism was for them a useless quality, even a weakness for their business "entrepreneurship". Gangsters were succeeding at the expense of morality, work ethic and democratic principles. After the Code articulated the way of conduct, and after, as Hark cites, Will Hays "was forced (by a gangster picture *Manhattan Melodrama* in 1934) to institute a moratorium on gangster film production in the following year," (2007: 123) the gangsters as "celebrities" were thing of the past. Now, they were a menace for both the nation and the "little man". They were undemocratic and corrupted. Their behaviour was anti-social. The gangster has become outdated because, as Dickstein adds, "people are building things now." (2009: 243) The "cult of celebrity" was passed on the "little man" and his ethic, best described by heroes of Capra's populist universe, "love-thy-neighbour". Smedley links the decline of rugged individualism typical of gangster figures to reality: "the sheer numbers of those hit by unemployment and associated deprivations meant that the ethos of "go-it-alone" individualism had to be moderated; problems were bound to be shared, and solved through communal endeavour." (2011: 23) This communal effort often meant, in terms of the Hollywood cinema, the help of a virginal woman, considerate friends, reforming priests and benevolent authority. One of the best early examples of the new trajectory of the Hollywood cinema is the movie adaptation of a German novel *Little Man, What Now?* (1934), directed by Frank Borzage, a Hollywood regular whose work is characterized by his

advocacy of love's supremacy. The story is one of economic hardship in the 1920s Germany and how familial order can cure social ills. The protagonist, Hans Pinneberg (Douglass Montgomery), is truly miserable because he cannot secure a cozy life for his lady and himself. But, as the opening foreword says, and as the rest of the movie plays out, the only thing he really needs to overcome his stressful situation is "a love of a good woman, in whose eyes a man can become bigger than the whole world."

Director Frank Capra was the epitome of the 1930s America populist tradition and the success story promised by the 1930s American Dream. After the huge success of his screwball comedy, *It Happened One Night* (1934), Capra focused on films that would teach millions of Americans the benefits of living in a country like America. He took seriously Roosevelt's wake-up call that "happiness doesn't lie in the mere possession of money, but in the joy of achievement," and created stories (with a huge help from his regular collaborator, screenwriter Robert Riskin), starting with *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936), that needed to foster the goodwill of the "little people". Capra's "little man" dwelled in the populist world of "city slickers" and fake intellectuals (in *Mr. Deeds*, artists who don't know how to run an opera, unless it is customary to lose money), and shyster lawyers and ungallant reporters (in *Mr. Smith* and *Meet John Doe*, secretaries and columnists who would sell their souls for a swell story) which was, once again, in tune with Roosevelt's populist rhetoric. The greediness and snobbishness of this world is brought to the extreme in *Mr. Deeds* (1936), as Longfellow Deeds (Gary Cooper) is charged by making his philanthropy a proof of his insanity (wants to give away his inherited fortune of 20 million dollars to poor farmers).

For "little man", egoism brought evil, and cooperation justice (suiting the New Deal values). Cooperation led the "little man" to eventual success, in terms of the populist cinema of the 1930s common good as the foremost goal. He challenged the earlier "ethos of success" and morals upheld by troublesome city boys who forgot all about the power of love. The most illustrative examples of the "little man's" courage to face life derive from Capra's more political movies (*Mr. Deeds Goes to Town, You Can't Take It with You, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Meet John Doe*). His box office hit and Academy Award winning *You Can't Take It with You* (1938) provides the ultimate attack on predatory ethos of success at all cost. Mr. Kirby (Edward Arnold) and Grandpa Vanderhoff (Lionel Barrymore) are the two opposites. While Vanderhoff exhibits "philosophy of absolute freedom and tolerance for everybody's foibles," (Bergman 1972: 145) Kirby is trapped in his greedy dream of accumulating as much prestige and money as he can. In the end, the movie shows how Kirby's way makes him and the people

around him miserable (doesn't have any real friends and loses his son's affection because he stands in the way of his happiness), whereas Vanderhoff's Lincoln-like philosophy, "with malice toward none and charity to all," something he quotes and follows intently, creates abundance of communal respect and love.

Image from *You Can't Take It with You* (1938)[20]

Even the very title suggests its ultimate point: why pursue wealth and making more money than you can ever spend when "you can't take it with you". As Deeds teaches, it is more important getting along with others than surpassing them. That is why Deeds will always choose to "help the fellas who can't make the hill on high", instead of profiting from their misery. In his populist trilogy, Capra celebrated the rural sensibilities and philosophy of his small-town patriot (conveniently named Mr. Longfellow Deeds, Mr. Jefferson Smith and John Doe). Roffman and Purdy realized that the innocence and idealism of Capra's heroes is rooted in small-town society and symbols of American patriotism: "Deeds sentimentalizes over Grant's tomb, Smith over Lincoln's Memorial and Capitol Dome, and John over baseball and average Joes." (1981: 184) In a populist and New Deal tradition, Capra attributed America's ills to personal evil, which grew in scope, finally reaching fascist dimensions in his last movie before the WWII, *Meet John Doe* (1941). However, Capra continued to supply the American audience with fantasies of goodwill, all while clinging to the New Deal's optimism. Even in *Meet John Doe* (1941), his most demagogic and unresolved work of the populist trilogy, Capra doesn't lose his sense of optimism during what are intensely desperate times for the common

[20] Grandpa Vanderhoff (far right) converts the villain Mr. Kirby (far left) to his love-thy-neighbour philosophy. Mr. Kirby leaves behind his fortune just to play harmonica, as a symbol of his joyful youthful days; in the middle their children (Vanderhoff's granddaughter and Kirby's son) symbolizing reunion of the two opposite upbringings.

Americans. The movie confronts the issues of the manipulative power of the media and the nature of political propaganda, as Americans are seemingly deceived into accepting an iron hand leader as their rescuer. As Dickstein observes properly, "the strong-willed man of authority became metaphor for fascism," (2009: 352) and Capra couldn't let him beat the "meek" (i.e., the people of civic virtue). The honest people in Capra world will restore the proper rule and will never surrender, as Gary Cooper concludes at one point "if it's worth dying for, it's worth living for." Capra's movies were the ones most targeted by fans letters. The positive reviews of *Mr. Smith* from critics "of vastly different political persuasions (*Time, Daily Variety, Nation,* or even *Daily Worker* as the official newspaper of the U.S. Communist Party) suggest just how widely Capra was admired." (Dick 2010: 77) He succeeded awakening the public, forcing them to give a second thought on issues such as loyalty, philanthropism and moral courage. All necessary for a true patriot, he would argue.

The "little man" discovered a long-standing American tradition. He represented triumph of rural sensibilities over urban corruption (very similar to classic westerns of late 1930s and early 1940s). These heroes were fashioned as a response to the Depression. In the midst of an economic and spiritual crisis, Capra's heroes exhibit unique self-reliance which rests upon humble rural upbringing. The innocence of his heroes is regularly "resurrected". In Capra's populist universe this meant that goodhearted small-town girl who loses her ethical compass in the turmoil of city life (usually being a newspaper girl or secretary), will through love, understanding and compassion find her way back to the rural qualities she possesses in the first place. As Clarissa Saunders (Jean Arthur) says to Mr. Smith (James Stewart) in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939): "you have plain, decent, every-day, common rightness," which will at the end win her over to his cause.

"Little man" was struggling for a democratic ideal: America as a place for a more egalitarian society, where each citizen will be protected from individuals' usurpation of the Constitution of the United States. The democratic ideal meant that the "average Joe" can express his dissatisfaction, being a dispossessed farmer's voice in *Mr. Deeds* or an extreme political staging of a filibuster[21] in *Mr. Smith*. Capra's heroes wanted to, as Mr. Smith screams at those who commercialize on false news, "tell the truth for a change". The democratic ideal was also linked to the feeling of the American exceptionalism. As Mr. Deeds explains to Babe Bennett (Jean Arthur), only in "a country like America" could a small Ohio farm boy and son

[21] A prolonged speech of a member of a legislature (Mr. Smith in Capra's movie launches it in the U.S. Senate) who wants to obstruct passing of a law.

of a tanner become a great soldier, and then president (referring to Ulysses S. Grant). Capra's American Dream rests upon the dignity of the common individual and the common destiny of all who are persuaded to join the righteous side. All these uniquely populist values, as Muscio identifies as "anti-city, anti-politician, anti-intellectual, anti-progressive and anti-big business," (1996: 9) were being sold to the American audience during the 1930s by Hollywood's most praise-worthy movies. The belief that "maybe there really wasn't an America, maybe there was just Frank Capra," articulated by American director John Cassavetes some decades later, seems well founded, as Capra's movies were promoting an image of America as Americans want it to be remembered, or everything that America aspired to be.[22]

7. British – Empire movies, "grand man" biopics and westerns as the 1930s rising trends

The "little man's" values were incorporated in other celebrated film heroes. Another two types of Hollywood heroes, which emerged after the Great Depression, were the conveyors of democratic principles, camaraderie values and humanitarian commitment: the hero of the "British-empire" movies and the "grand man" of Hollywood's bio-pics.

British-empire movies[23] were by form adventure movies, sometimes even swashbucklers, that enjoyed great box office success. The genre owed most of its popularity to the discovery of a new Warner Brothers protégée, Errol Flynn. As the producers teamed him with Olivia de Haviland, these movies were ready to reach even broader spectrum of audience. Moreover, as Hark states, these movies were popular because they were similar to the New Deal policies, "neither too left nor too right; they projected portions of both viewpoints. Liberation and conservatism were blended." (2007: 142-3) They were promoting egalitarian values, and at the same time duty-driven masculinity and a strong patriarchal leader who would provide domestic security for all classes of people. During the 1920s, adventure movies were high in demand, mostly due to Douglas Fairbanks on-screen and off-screen persona. As the conditions changed, as the Great Depression affected lives of almost everyone, alliance to the side that would fight

[22] This Cassavetes quote is featured in the opening of the documentary *Frank Capra's American Dream* (1997), hosted and narrated by Ron Howard. The documentary affirms that Capra's populist works were assuring that democratic ideals are worth fighting for and that the audience enjoyed the messages put forth by the movies.

[23] Movies that usually provided a romanticized view of the Empire. Sometimes called "merrie England pictures", indicating Hollywood's fondness of freedom-loving England trope and its heroes in times of grand-scale misfortunes.

for the right cause became more important than achieving personal glory. In the 1930s, adventure movies continued the tradition of the Warner Brothers' socially-conscious films. Unlike Fairbanks' movies, these were less mere escapist entertainment and offered unique political statements which corresponded to actual political movements of the time. These movies, which production increased as 1930s were coming to an end (e.g., *Gunga Din* (1939), *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939), *Beau Geste* (1939)), boosted the nation's morale by overplaying the values of Americanism, especially the urgency of male bonding. They celebrated brotherhood as the most gallant gesture. Just like the movie *Beau Geste's* (1939) foreword says: "…the love of brother for brother is steadfast as the stars and endures like the word of the prophet." Brotherhood was in many ways instrumental in conveying American political aspirations, usually through heroic last stand of a whole platoon. In *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936), Geoffrey Vickers (Errol Flynn) is a British captain who leads one final stand against rebellious and evil Afghan tribe. As he sets his task to avenge the British victims, he gathers his forces and asks of them to fight one last time "for conspicuous gallantry!"

Adventure as a genre had a definite affinity for rebels and outlaws, usually celebrated as peace or freedom fighters. This desired peace didn't indicate an isolationist or anti-war attitude. The intention was to restore peace, no matter the costs. Violence was displayed, but in each case where a non-violent overthrown could be carried out, it was. Therefore, in Errol Flynn movies, "official corruption and inefficiency are beaten by Flynn and his gang of pirates or brigade of lancers or band of merry men in righteous rebellion before he could set things right." (Roffman, Purdy 1981: 8) The movies which Roffman and Purdy are referring to are *Captain Blood* (1935), *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936) and *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), all three determined to promote anti-authoritarian governing principles that would resonate with the late 1930s American audience. Their task to "set things right" meant to restore order and prove who the real patriot is. Of all 1930s genres, adventure movies were the most rewarding for its male heroes. Although the image of an outlaw hero was very similar to that of a western, in adventure genre the hero was honoured even more. He was honoured by being "crowned" with land and knighted (Blood from *Captain Blood* and Robin from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*), and by gaining an amnesty as a proof of his integrity and moral superiority (Byam from *Mutiny on the Bounty*). Even more, his noble actions always resulted in improving communal conditions in otherwise discriminating society. In the genre's formula, it all comes to acknowledging and accepting the system in play, but changing the men in charge. These men in charge were seen as the cause of all evil that came upon the upright citizens. One group of

adventure movies, most notably *Captain Blood* (1935), *The Lives of Bengal Lancer* (1935) and *Beau Geste* (1939), staged rebellions against internal tyranny. Another group of adventure movies, like *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936), *Gunga Din* (1939) and *The Sea Hawk* (1940), fought external enemies of civilized order. These tyrannists were aiming at, as Byam from *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935) points out, "breaking the spirit" of their compatriots. The political angle of these movies was even more apparent as they strongly emphasized security as prime national value. Just as opening foreword of *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935) confirms: Captain William Bligh's abuses and the mutiny that came in response "helped bring about a new discipline based upon mutual respect between officers and men, by which Britain's sea power is maintained as security for all who pass upon the seas." Later productions in this genre also asserted Britain's sea power, this time not by disciplining cruel commanders, but by intervening in bigger world crisis. They started acknowledging the realities of the new European war. For example, in *The Sea Hawk* (1940), Britannia-rule-the-waves theme serves to fight with an allegorical Hitler, Phillip II of Spain, who speaks of defeating England to enable his country, a metaphorical Germany, to conquer "the New World". On this particular subject more will be brought out in the chapter "Political censorship before 1939 – studios and PCA silencing filmmakers, eliminating Jewishness and allusion to Nazi danger."

The "grand man" of the 1930s Hollywood biopics also suggests a change in the course of Hollywood's social and political advocacy. Overall, in the beginning of the 1930s these biopics were all safely set in foreign countries, mostly European countries. American producers avoided setting their stories in the 20th century (accordingly, some historians and authors labelled Zanuck's studio 19th Century Fox). Just as Balio elaborates, "at first, Hollywood preferred foreign biographies because they carried with them virtually no audience preconception, and were easily adjusted to contemporary values." (1993: 192) First wave of biopics, among them more prestigious *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* (1934), *The House of Rothschild* (1934), *Cleopatra* (1935) and *Cardinal Richelieu* (1935), were conceived as stories of romance and sophistication or personal success in times of misfortune. These movies exhibited nothing politically sensational, with the exception of *The House of Rotschild* (1934), which showed intolerance, mostly in the form of anti-Semitism, operating in 18th and 19th century Europe.

In the mid-1930s, the Warners' output changed from social-realist stories which were stories about individual rise and fall, or how Robe puts it "domestic hardship" (2010: 218), to more politically global in scope and critique. They conceived stories on figures like Emile Zola

(1937), Louis Pasteur (1936), Benito Juarez (1939) and Paul Ehrlich (1940), history's rehabilitated heroes. The projects were all taken by the team Dieterle-Muni, with the exception of another politically-engaged actor taking the role of German-Jewish doctor Ehrlich, Edward G. Robinson. The values these "grand man" cherished could be seen as universal, not just part of the world and times they inhabited. Louis Pasteur was fighting against an oppressive, narrow-minded and sceptical society's elite (against fellow scientists and political authority, even the emperor Napoleon III being among them). Emile Zola was trying to rehabilitate French soldier Alfred Dreyfuss, who was falsely accused of treason by the biased French military (under the surface even anti-Semitic). Benito Juarez was trying to establish a democratic system of governance in otherwise corruption-inflicted Mexico, playing against the tyrannical and fraudulent ruler of Mexico, Napoleon III, who wants to rob Mexicans of their land. Paul Ehrlich was, similarly to Louis Pasteur, fighting to make scientific knowledge accessible to all in a severely anti-Semitic environment. What Leo Rosten calls "the dignity of the Dieterle's conception," (1941: 285) was actually stand against some form of fascism. These biopics never intended to be a lesson on history or historical facts. They provided a collective hagiography of the Hollywood progressive forces. They were actually overtly didactic in validating values that American tradition was most proud of, the democratic principles of equality and justice. This didacticism was obvious as every biopic included at least one climactic scene in which the protagonist acquits himself by a soliloquy that exposes the lies and hypocrisy of the elite or society in a whole. In his sermon, the protagonist takes a stand for truth and justice.

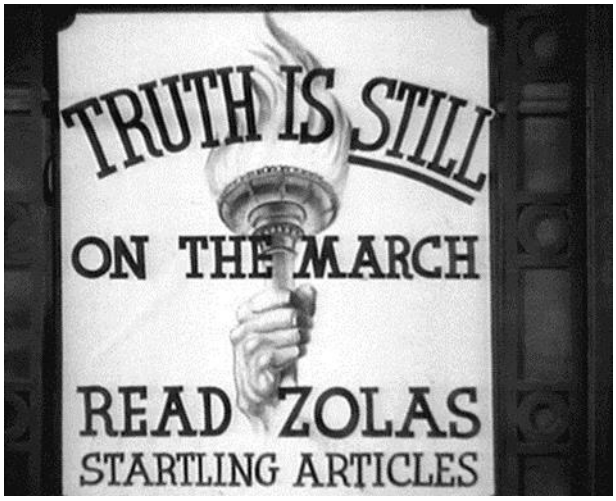


Image from *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937)[24]

[24] The image shows a leaflet that calls the audience to hail Zola's commitment to heal the society's ills.

As Emile Zola screams, he will save the army and France by "letting the truth conquer!" And the truth is: no society can progress until it accepts liberty as its governing principle. What all these heroes have in common, as Roffman and Purdy assume, is that they "represent humanitarianism during malicious times and celebrate victory over selfish preoccupation of their powerful contemporaries." (1981: 156) Especially through extremely powerful portrayals of Emile Zola and Louis Pasteur, the most humanistic values and altruistic behaviour were supported. They were fighters for social justice in rigid and bigoted society, and at that martyr figures. Emile Zola even linked the case of his defendant, Dreyfuss, to biggest known martyr, Jesus, and his crucifixion, by firmly stating, "that was also a closed case". The values that Paul Muni promoted through these historic figures are spotlessly listed by Faucette:

> "Muni created characters that were cerebral, courageous, sensitive, and who possessed strong convictions. Yet, what distinguished these performances from his earlier ones is the way in which Warner Bros. accentuated Muni's screen masculinity as thoughtful, tender, cooperative and downplayed his earlier portrayal of masculinity as aggressive, violent, and indicative of the self-made man." (2010: 114)

This description fits perfectly as an explanation why another potentially far-reaching biopic didn't succeed. *Parnell* (1937), filmed by MGM and starring Clark Gable, should have been another strong indictment of the corrupted and biased elite. However, it was a commercial and critical disaster. Gable wasn't able to portray "The Uncrowned King of Ireland" as a sensitive soul, and every bit of action that Pasteur and Zola demonstrated in defending their moral convictions was disregarded in Parnell. The film concentrated on Parnell's private affairs, which made his character seem impotent in political fight for the Irish agrarian poor. The case of MGM's *Parnell* (1937) not measuring up to Warner Bros. prestigious biopics proves that New-Deal-like rendering of history which would allegorically challenge political and social prejudices of the 1930s needed to be the fundamental point of successful biopics.

All these biographies, even projects on Anglo-American great man followed up by 20th Century Fox and Zanuck (e.g., Irving Berlin, Alexandar Graham Bell, Henry Stanley and David Livingstone) were of men giving their lives to work. The ethics of hard work is emphasized in these movies as title characters only wish that society allows them and others to pursue their calling, in the end to let the scientific progress reign. This progress should help the society in its entirety, across all classes and ethnicities. The scientific success requires strong moral conviction. And in populist tradition, the political success as well.

The man who best connected these tendencies of the "little man's" populism and "grand man's" historical greatness (and contemporary urgency) was Abraham Lincoln. Two significant movies were filmed on the topic of Lincoln's greatness during this period. Before *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) and *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940) were filmed, Lincoln was brought to mind by several notable movie characters from the 1930s. Lincoln was referred to by many titles, sometimes the "emancipator", sometimes "unifier" or "liberator", sometimes "builder of the nation", but most importantly is how he calls himself in *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939): "plain". Every time Lincoln featured in a movie, he proved to be a spiritual leader of a nation in distress. In *The Prisoner of Shark Island* (1936), a movie that absolves Dr. Samuel Mudd as an alleged conspirator in the Lincoln assassination, on the day the American Civil War has ended (9th April 1865), Lincoln asks the band to perform Dixie as "our lawful prize," wishing to rehabilitate the Southerners. In *The Littlest Rebel* (1935), Lincoln saves Temple's father, a Confederate, who gets arrested for treason. In *Juarez* (1939), the director linked the Mexican president to Lincoln, although historically inaccurate, in several ways. Firstly, both presidents shared similar origins (self-educated and practicing the law). Secondly, in his struggle against Napoleon III, Juarez depends on the victory of the North in the American Civil War and Lincoln's support. And thirdly, from a cinematic point of view, in several shots the viewers can notice Benito Juarez standing in the front of a framed Lincoln's portrait. It is safe to say that Juarez was also "liberator" and "builder of a nation" in his attempts to set the Mexicans free of foreign occupation. In *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), Mr. Smith models his ideals after president Lincoln. We can almost sense Lincoln's spirit every time Smith, as a senator, stresses the true value of liberty in a modern corrupt world. In *Union Pacific* (1939), it is the president Lincoln who believed that the rail must go through and that the East and West must be connected. In *Sergeant York* (1941), one of the most patriotic and interventionist movies before America's entrance into the WWII, the hero York (Gary Cooper) is linked to Lincoln to reinforce the hero's moral rectitude, especially in the context of his political conversion story. York is through his origin connected to Lincoln similarly as Juarez, and even more by indicating his mountain-man, "folksy" appearance, something often attributed to Lincoln.

Image from *Sergeant York* (1941)[25]

Lincoln functioned as personification of the American spirit, embodying the virtues of "common sense" intelligence, compassion, resolve and love of country. The moviegoers of the Great Depression era saw him as an icon of self-made, "rise from obscurity to distinction", which was at first more in tune with the 1920s values. However, by emphasizing his patriotism and populist qualities in demanding times, he became the real 1930s hero. In *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), Lincoln (Henry Fonda) wants to show that populist sentiments can and must be turned into political principles. With this fictional depiction of Lincoln, the director John Ford was trying to secure image of Lincoln whose humanity is his greatest virtue. *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940) continues in the manner of the "little grand man". Whereas *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) didn't have any real political ambition, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940) was ready to provide profound commentary on present-day situation through emphasis on famous Douglas-Lincoln debate. *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* is a play written by Robert E. Sherwood, a Broadway playwright who, as Shindler conveys, "announced that he had decided to permit the release of the film version of his play *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* because he believed that the international situation was too serious for Lincoln's sentiments about democracy to be withheld from the world's audiences." (1996: 207) Even Raymond Massey, the actor who embodied Lincoln, said that "its reading of history was actively influenced by the author's and audience's need to solve contemporary problems such as the impending war in Europe." (Smyth 2006: 193) Whereas *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) was more interested in the virtues of family life and populist reflex of communal help, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940) was determined to address prejudices of 19th century America and, under the surface, present-day uncertainties.

[25] Alvin C. York (Gary Cooper) evoking Lincoln through his mountain-man appearance and contemplating the true meaning of line: "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's".

By the end of the decade, there was a shift towards American heroes in Hollywood cinema. Motion Pictures' Greatest Year[26], 1939, became also motion pictures' most American year. As Thorp signalized, "out of some 574 feature pictures 481 were tales of American life," among them epics of American pioneer past were filmed more than ever before. (Thorp 1939: 188-9) The American Revolutionary War and Civil War were source of inspiration for many directors who desired to, as Ceplair and Englund write, familiarize the audience with the "original democratic impulses of the Founding Fathers." (1983: 121) And the heroes that weren't Americans had a strong political conviction that they had to share. As John Mosher's review of *Juarez* (1939) in *The New Yorker* points out: "had the picture been released in 1929, it would have been called Maximilian and Carlotta or just Carlotta." (Shindler 1996: 207) In the dawn of the WWII, romantic interests were put aside, so not to harm the protagonist's political fight. And as even Thorp back in 1939 noticed, "it was good business to put the emphasis on the power of democracy." (1939: 300)

Another genre emphasized the power of democracy, but through the frontiersmen and American pioneers: the western. Before the year 1939, westerns were on the margins of the mainstream Hollywood filmmaking. Many critics perceived the myths they were constructing obsolete and false. In addition, the producers and censors thought westerns could promote anti-social behaviour. Revival of westerns in 1939 and elevating them to A-budget productions was an indicator of "Americanism" and patriotism entering more and more public domain. As Slotkin evaluates, the time was right for "the audience to see the heroic expression of American and democratic virtues without the chauvinism, economic self-interest, or racial snobbery of the totalitarian states." (1998: 280) These westerns were arguing that America is a nation that conquered wilderness, won independence and established democratic power. Westerns deal with mythmaking. Surely one that is explored over and over again is the frontier. The frontier is not only a geographical location, but also a psychological state of mind, one that regularly includes the idea of nation-building. Just as Lincoln wanted to bring together the North and the South, westerns like *Union Pacific* (1939), *Dodge City* (1939) and *Northwest Passage* (1940) wanted to connect the East and West, as a sign of nation's progress and greatness. They also aspired to, as the foreword to *Northwest Passage* (1940) formulates, "make simple men, unknown to history, into giants in daring and endurance." The Wild West, and the last decades of the 19th century as the usual period during which classical westerns are set, was also a place

[26] Widely referred to because that was the year Hollywood produced unprecedent number of classics in variety of genres (e.g., *Gone with the Wind, Stagecoach, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, The Wizard of Oz, Jesse James, Wuthering Heights, Young Mr. Lincoln, Ninotchka, Gunga Din* etc.).

of somewhat cultural pluralism, melting pot of ex-Confederate and ex-Union soldiers (see later in *The Fighting 69th* what does that bring and mean to the interventionist cause). More than anything else, these westerns, especially the quintessential *Stagecoach* (1939), were suggestive of the populist New Deal American ethos. They were arguing for, as May hints, "the development of a public life where the opposites cooperate." (2000: 89) In *Stagecoach* (1939), the honourable and loyal outlaw Ringo Kidd (John Wayne), cooperates with a good-hearted prostitute (Claire Trevor) and open-minded drunken Irish doctor (Thomas Mitchell) in delivering a baby and defending their fellow passengers against an Apache attack. Westerns like *Stagecoach* (1939), *Jesse James* (1939) and *Dodge City* (1939) establish the image of an outlaw as a person who has more integrity and communal love than those claiming to connect America by railroads. They are loyal to the idea of a utopian democratic country and their local communities. They will defend local farmers from the usurpation of the American law. The outlaw heroes and frontiersmen from these westerns are the true promoters of egalitarian values, all while "subtly accusing Hoover-like (Republican) policy of "America for Americans" and businessmen's immorality."[27] (McBride 2011: 283)

The "little man", the "grand man", the outlaw, the social bandit and the youthful stars of the 1930s Hollywood, are all conveyors of patriotism and Americanism.

8. Hollywood performing its patriotic duty

During the first years of the Great Depression, and until the appearance of the Hays Code and the selection of a new president, American Patriotism was rarely viewed as a meaningful or admiring social value. Through the Silent era, the myth of individual success usually included a noteworthy praise to the country where "dreams come true", but emotionally intense patriotic feelings were ignored. It was financially and morally unsound to invoke war times during the Great Depression years, thus patriotic feelings had to be introduced in different manner. Waving the flag and singing the "Star-Spangled Banner" didn't spell patriotism. Initially, to support the Roosvelt administration, especially during the days of the first New Deal programs, this was commonplace for some studios, most notably the Warner Brothers. As

[27] In this sense, *Stagecoach* (1939) offers a strong case against the "Republican hypocrisy" that the audience of the pre-Code wasn't bothered with. The movie openly suggests that in the end "the blessings of civilization" are better to be avoided if they are grounded in snobbery of acclaimed citizens (e.g., Ford and Nichols created a character of a greedy banker whose dictum "what's good for the banks is good for the country" makes him and him alike enemies of the true social progress).

the decade advanced, this "too glamorous" and fanatical patriotism (when addressed in movies, it is defined as nationalism) was linked to dictatorships and fascist countries.

For the purpose of this work, terms "nationalism", "nationalistic" and "national" are second-rate, because they almost never appear in the movies of the era in question. And not just in the movies, but in the studies of Hollywood's output. And when they do, it is only in the opposition to patriotism ("we", patriots versus "them", nationalists). Nationalism in the 1930s has often been associated with isolationism and regressive conservatism. And this nationalism was shaped as an uncompromising viewpoint. It didn't tolerate diversity, whereas patriotism did. In a country where nationalism reigned, not all men were equal. In a patriotic country they were. Nationalistic reasoning was chauvinistic in a way that it reserved all the goods only for one group of people, one class, one race, usually considered the privileged. Intense nationalistic sentiment fostered an anti-foreign-born bias. Patriotic reflex safeguarded political, religious and cultural pluralism from any possible xenophobic outburst that a nationalist movement might encourage.

What would a whole account on meaning of patriotism include? Is it even possible to fully encompass such a vague identification? The usual definition of patriotism imagines it being a feeling of special devotion to one's own country, a particular place and a way of life. A more substantial estimate is provided by Igor Primoratz, saying:

> "Such an account would say something about the patriot's beliefs about the merits of his country, his need to belong to a group and be a part of a more encompassing narrative, to be related to a past and a future that transcend the narrow confines of an individual's life and its mundane concerns, as well as social and political conditions that affect the ebb and flow of patriotism, its political and cultural influence..." ("Patriotism", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL=https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/patriotism/)

In this sense, patriotism went hand in hand with everything the term "Americanism" stood for in the 1930s Hollywood's eyes. By many, Americanism is thought to be more a conviction, than any race or creed. As its main virtues, usually are listed justice, freedom, loyalty and democracy, and rights to "life, liberty and pursuit of happiness". One definition that would often reappear in the anti-Nazi and interventionist movies is that Americanism means to "remain a nation of free man" (the best examples are movies *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* and *The Sea Hawk*). Grandpa Vanderhoff from *You Can't Take It with You* (1938) provides one of the best links between patriotism and Americanism by teaching his daughter-in-law Penny, an amateur playwright, to write about real American heroes who didn't need any other -isms to

succeed except Americanism: “Americanism. Let ‘em know something about Americans: John Paul Jones, Patrick Henry, Samuel Adams, Washington, Jefferson, Monroe, Lincoln, Grant, Lee, Edison, Mark Twain. When things got tough for those boys, they didn’t run around looking for -isms”. All other -isms, and grandpa Vanderhoff mentions communism, fascism and voodooism, are like itches or violent urges, that evolve into ideologies which “commercialize on fear.” And all the great American heroes that Vanderhoff names, fought, each in his own way, maliciousness as the American patriot’s enemy number one. But essentially, Americanism was: “the rewards of social stability – wealth, success and the girl for the hero; fellowship, happiness and trustworthy leaders for the rest of us. It was a religious faith in a secular social myth that found its embodiment in patriotism and American democracy.” (Sklar 1994: 306)

This social stability was in Hollywood cinema of the 1930s understood as possibility of social mobility, towards all-embracing middle-class (from screwball comedies and women’s film to adventure movies and westerns). These movies viewed the American Dream not in the context of the 1920s excessive accumulation of wealth, but as “rags to riches” stories, “riches” being stable home and social security, as bestsellers of the 1930s and their movie adaptations exemplify perfectly (*The Good Earth*, *Gone with the Wind* and *The Grapes of Wrath*). For example, in *Gone with the Wind* (1939), Scarlett (Leigh), in an effort to hold onto her family ties, is intensely attached to the land, her estate Tara, because, as her father teaches her, “the land is the only thing that matters.” The Joads from *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), in times of extreme poverty caused by the Dust Bowl during the Great Depression, also desperately cling to their land in Oklahoma, where “they were all born, some killed and some died.”

Patriotism in the 1930s Hollywood cinema didn’t seem to be a worrisome issue from the PCA’s point of view. Apart from envisioning the necessity of repeating to Americans why they should be proud to be Americans and why this country is unique, the Breen’s office and Hays Code didn’t provide any real objections. As long as patriotism was a simple, elemental thing, like in *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939), “of getting down the flintlock and defending a man’s house amidst the clearings,” (Smyth 2006: 246) the PCA didn’t have to worry. Only real matter the Breen’s office was dedicated to protect from the start was that “the use of the Flag should be consistently respectful.” (Doherty, 2007: 354)

The emergence of youthful stars earlier described, undoubtedly fit into the Hollywood studios’ patriotic leanings. From a political perspective, Shirley Temple wants of her father figures to act democratically, to treat people of other origin as equals, even if it is possible to

become friends. Shirley disciplines her rigid father figures, even the strict military men from Kiplingesque world of *Wee Willie Winkie* (1937). She makes every each of them proud of their country and its heritage (dominantly American and British). Her performance of "Auld Lang Syne" in *Wee Willie Winkie* (1937), as Sergeant Donald MacDuff (Victor McLaglen) is confined to his deathbed, immerses the audience even further in a world where patriotism is a required quality. Two years later, in 1939, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, both on their respective peak of fame, filmed with the musical set pieces greatest authority of their times, Busby Berkeley, a popular musical called *Babes in Arms*. In the movie, Mickey Rooney leads a gang of youth vaudeville entertainers as a genuine general, making the whole nation proud of them, as he notices that their performance is: "Bigger than just a show. It's everybody in the country!" The teaming of Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland ends with two songs, "God's Country" and "Yip Harburg" as "a patriotic salute to the United States, the diversity of its peoples and the freedom to live one's life in happiness." (Lucia 2015: 227) In the movie, the youngsters' proving to their elderly that they, and the whole country, are a force to be reckon with, is even contrasted to fascism: "We've got no Duce, we've got no Fuhrer, but we've got Garbo and Norma Shearer!" Rooney's character in the Hardy series also served for the purpose of lauding American Patriotism. Whenever Louis B. Mayer would catch Rooney misbehaving, he would reprimand him by saying, as Gabler conveys: "You're Andy Hardy! You're the United States! You're the Stars and Stripes. Behave yourself! You're a symbol." (1988: 216)

For the Hollywood community of the 1930s, patriotism also went hand in hand with populism. It was, like populism, more rooted in the rural foundations of the country. In the 1930s, theatres in the rural areas were "promoters of the communal and patriotic loyalties," and not the ones in big cities. (May 2000: 128) The Roosevelt, The Lincoln, The Pocahontas, The Washington, The Will Rogers, were the most popular names among these communities. In addition, American patriotic reflex, just like the populist one, was to root for the underdog against the evil authoritarian forces. For Andy Hardy "patriotism meant fighting even when the odds seemed impossible". This echoes one of Capra's "small-town" heroes, Jefferson Smith, who reminds now crooked senator Paine that he once said that the only causes worth fighting for are the lost causes, because, as Mr. Smith says, "one plain simple rule: love thy neighbour". Populist tradition was making patriotism more noble and less self-interested. That is why Mr. Smith is the perfect model of patriotism: as a senator and a youth leader, he wants to use his influence to build a national boy's camp which will teach thousands of American boys how to behave for the well-being of their country. In a populist manner, the patriotism displayed in *Mr*.

Smith didn't rely on flag-waving, but "on confronting all the fakes, injustice, oppression and selfish aggrandizement." (May 2000: 88-9) It is no wonder that James Hilton called *Mr. Smith*, in a periodical *London Sunday Graphic*, "just about the best American patriotic film ever made." (McBride 2011: 422)

Patriotism also went hand in hand with the Catholic teachings that through the Hays Code entered Hollywood output. Hollywood executives cherished the ethic of Christian community, despite most of them not being Catholics. They were linking happy home to love for a country as a second home in many ways. Home was, in a Catholic fashion, traditional place that demanded sacrifice, just like country. In terms of patriotism, sacrificing personal desire, or sometimes even your own life for the country's well-being (e.g., *Gunga Din, The Charge of the Light Brigade, The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*), was during the 1930s repeatedly linked to Catholic values. Cultural influence of the Catholic community on studio executives' reasoning was immense. For example, Jack Warner's favourite line of attack to anything controversial, recorded in his response to the issue of Jewishness in *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet* (1940), was "what would Catholics say?" (Freedland 1983: 125) Even better example of Catholicism influencing moguls' notion of Americanism is Jack brother's, Harry's, confession of his favourite film in an interview for *Fortune* magazine, "the one on Patrick Henry (*Give Me Liberty,*1936)," prove yet again their patriotism by referencing Patrick Henry, a United States emblematic figure of the American Revolution.[28] In the rest of the interview, Harry Warner cited the Bible as the foundation of Americanism and patriotism, and appealed to the predominantly Christian population despite his own Jewish devotion, wanting to prove that one was inseparable from the other. To this, it must be added that many priest, reverend, parson or padre figures were playing an important role in compensating moral values in Hollywood movies of the 1930s. Priests were not just ideal figures for compensating the lack of proper moral values, but also a patriotic force on their own. Both Father Flanagan (Spencer Tracy) in *Boys Town* (1938) and Father Duffy (Pat O'Brien) in *The Fighting 69th* (1940) are led through their lives by the principle, "serving my creator and country."

[28] An American statesman, one of the Founding Fathers. In the American political tradition, remembered for his war speech from 1775 in which he greeted the war against the Great Britan by making only one course of action acceptable: "give me liberty, or give me death!"

9. Patriot's duty, or what are we fighting for and against what: "we don't want any "isms" in this country except Americanism!"[29]

In earlier chapters, it was showed how studio identities, production trends and stars type were used for more than just financial reasons. In previous chapter, patriotism was linked to Hollywood's confirmation of American values, the term "Americanism", populist tradition and Catholic teachings in general. This chapter will reconsider the relation between patriotism and anti-Nazi (broader term anti-fascist) Hollywood filmmaking. The focus will be put on situations where protagonists and minor movie characters prove their patriotism in times of fascistic threats.

As Leo Rosten infers, "patriotic films involve the dramatization of accepted political values, prevailing civic emotions about our country, its institutions or national heroes." (1941: 79) In this sense, the most valued trait in patriotic films during the 1930s and before the attack on Pearl Harbour was the willingness to risk ruin in the service of an ideal. These movies were teaching that American patriot should defend the Founding Fathers' creed: free to think, free to speak, pursuit of happiness and the democracy as the guarantee of freedom, liberty and quality of life. All these virtues are at the core of the term "Americanism". These high principles, especially the concept of liberty, were often called to mind by the 1930s filmmakers. As Jefferson Smith from *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) declares: "liberty is too precious a thing to be buried in history books". That is why Mr. Smith, who back home is still a leader of a boy scout section "Boy Rangers", makes it his patriotic duty to bring closer every boy in this land to the true nature of liberty so that they don't neglect this precious heritage.

[29] This quote is featured in *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), when an American Legionnaire screams it in a defence of Americanism against the Nazi thugs who are trying to abolish it in favour of National-socialism.

Image from *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939)[30]

In Howard Hawks' *Sergeant York* (1941), Alvin York (Gary Cooper) gets the Mr. Smith's "liberty from the history books" dug out. He is given a book *History of the United States*, where he learns the story of a "whole people's struggle to be free," and becomes a dedicated WWI fighter. In Ford's *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939), by ending the story of a suffering frontier family during The American Revolutionary War (18th century) in a victorious manner (couple Gil and Lana defend their home on the frontier against savages with a help of their neighbours), John Ford strengthens the idea of "building a new nation conceived in liberty". Before he made *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), Capra in "love can conquer all" manner represented the unorthodox Vanderhoff home from *You Can't Take It with You* (1938) as the true and extreme embodiment of the liberty which Americans mustn't turn their back to if they want to feel fulfilled. It is a paradise where everybody is free and encouraged to pursue whatever quirky interest makes one happy (making fireworks, playing harmonica, writing plays, dancing ballet). Grandpa Vanderhoff, the leading figure in this "Shangri-La"[31] home, is the conveyor of the message that the freer the society, the greater the variety of individuals it can tolerate. That is the main message behind *Boys Town* (1938) as well, a movie on self-governed town, led by Catholic priest Father Flanagan, where "everybody worships as they please, thinks the way they want to think." These movies show that liberal inclinations of American cinema were distinguishing it from totalitarian approach to life and art.

[30] Jefferson Smith (James Stewart) pointing to the Capitol Dome as the symbol of liberty that every boy in this country needs to visit to appreciate the fact how lucky he is to be living in a country like this.

[31] Shangri-La is a fictional, utopian place in the Himalayas portrayed in the novel Lost Horizon. It is noteworthy to state that Capra adapted this novel in 1937, and if one accepts Graham Greene's thought that "nothing reveals men's characters more than their utopias", one can claim that Capra is always opting for a world where kindness, tolerance and liberty are leading principles.

Those characters who discredit these inclinations, Hollywood identifies as harmful. In *Meet John Doe* (1941), the Capraesque villain, would-be-dictator D.B. Norton (Edward Arnold), restricts freedom of speech to control the public opinion and thus making the voice of the "little man" (John Doe, i.e., Gary Cooper) and his message that "the meek shall inherit the earth" insignificant. In a Nazi universe, as seen in *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), free speech is also prohibited. At a German-American Bund rally, the Nazi thugs aren't allowing an American patriot to speak his mind, but force him out. In one more Nazi-run universe, *The Mortal Storm* (1940), two free-thinking young people (Martin and Freya) are pressed to flee from their native country, Germany, because there's no future for their kind of people. The ultimate and the most explicit critic of the misuse of the Founding Fathers' values was Chaplin with his *The Great Dictator* (1940). In the film, at one point the Minister of Propaganda Garbitsch (obvious reference to Goebbels) opens the ceremony with words: "Today, democracy, liberty and equality are words to fool the people. No nation can progress with such ideas. They stand in the way of action. Therefore, we frankly abolish them." Throughout the film, we are witnessing what the lack of fundamental human liberties does to people in the ghetto (Jews). But, in the last act, the disenfranchised Jewish barber (Chaplin himself) gets to use the freedom of speech in a soliloquy that will contest the dictator's power and call to fight. Abolishing all that Americanism stood for made the movie, although being a satire, a strong case for denouncing this kind of regime (i.e., Nazi).

Considering once again Rosten's claim that American movies which insist on dramatizing "prevailing civic emotions about our country" should be regarded as patriotic, it is safe to reason that political unity was "a civic emotion" abundantly admired. Many movies of the 1930s convey that American patriot is fighting for national unity and diversity. Previously, it was shown how Hollywood had an impulse for insisting on unity of family members, especially in times of distress (wars and economic upheavals). In the issue of proving patriotic values, many relevant political, historical and biographical movies of the 1930s sustained the importance of uniting all American citizens, as in the movie *Boys Town* (1938) Father Flanagan's unselfish actions on behalf of all boys, "regardless of race, colour or creed." During the first two years of Roosevelt's presidency, the symbol of Roosevelt's proclaimed political unity was the NRA eagle. The logo, usually placed in the opening credits, was visible in some of the most financially and critically successful movies of 1933-1935 period, like the very popular "backstage" musicals produced by the Warners studio (*42nd Street*, *Footlight Parade* and *Gold Diggers of 1933*).

Image from *Footlight Parade* (1933)[32]

Kaleidoscopic views of the American flag, NRA eagle and president Roosevelt were all part of the choreography in the final musical number of *Footlight Parade* (1933), "Shanghai-Lil". This number was a definite culmination of the essence of Warners-Busby Berkeley musicals. This visually flamboyant patriotic burst, to the accompaniment of a mixture of patriotic songs, all while uniting in a high-spirited dance American sailors and oriental dame called "Shanghai-Lil", was evidence to Hollywood's view of greatness of "its" nation. Even the logo of the NRA seen on the wall of the courtroom in the Warners Brothers' *Wild Boys of the Road* (1933) attests to the Rooseveltian principle that interdependent group beats rugged individualism. Besides the cinemas, Hollywood displayed the sentiment of American exceptionalism outside the screen. The promotion tour of *42nd Street* (1933) is a tremendous patriotic legacy. The publicity tour, which included some of the biggest movie stars from the Warners' lot, travelled from Hollywood to New York, ending in Washington, just in time for Roosevelt's inauguration (*42nd Street* premiered on 9th March and inauguration was held on 4th of March 1933). The premiere of *Boys Town* (1938) was also a testament, but this time to small-town patriotic community: "Fulfilling a special request Father Flanagan made to MGM President Louis B. Mayer, the movie held its premiere in Omaha, Nebraska on September 7, 1938, complete with all the glitz and glamour worthy of such an event. With more than 30,000 fans cheering them on, even the stars attending the gala said Omaha out-shined Hollywood."[33] Thorp even adds another brilliant publicity tour, "Taking Hollywood to the nation" by the Warners, as an example of Hollywood's unrestrained glorification of Americanism and the

[32] American sailors, led by the impresario played by James Cagney, using mosaic cards to create homage to Roosevelt in a musical number full of military-political exuberance.
[33] https://www.boystown.org/BoysTownMovie/Pages/Premier.aspx (Last retrieved on 3rd of September 2023).

government's approval of it: "For the opening of the western *Dodge City* (1939), the Warners ran a special train from California to Oklahoma, with the governors of Colorado, Kansas and New Mexico joining the stars." (1939: 50-1) All these communities displayed in backstage musicals, as in *42nd Street* (1933), social-issue dramas, as in *Boys Town* (1938) and westerns, as in *Dodge City* (1939), were synonymous with American nation as a whole. They endorsed metonym of community as nation.

National unity was promoted across the political spectrum. Just like the New Deal, it was neither politically right nor left. As the move toward a new world war was seeming more probable, the leftist and interventionist-oriented moviemakers were providing more and more output that would explain the necessity of limiting any differences among Americans. In *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1940), interventionist Lincoln concludes his speech on innate civic liberties with an outcry that "America cannot stand being divided!" In *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), the speaker who was bullied at the German-American Bund rally, an American patriot and a member of American Legion, proclaims: "aren't we all supposed to be Americans in America?" This echoes Mickey Rooney's cry in *Babes in Arms* (1939), that the showbiz industry includes "everybody in the country!"

Another political belief that American movie productions interested in political discourse covered was the idea that American political tradition teaches that people are superior to state. In this sense, American patriots have to fight fascism which opposes the category of "people" (individual will is subordinated to the state) and glorifies the category of "state" (identified with the flawless leader). Two populist heroes, both doctors, Captain Blood (*Captain Blood,* 1935) and Dr. Mudd (*The Prisoner of Shark Island,* 1936), show it to be true. In the movies' plots, they have sacred duties to their fellowmen, and not just to the state. The higher authority they are disobeying, a king or ruling politician, wants to assert the power of the state or kingdom over the actions of every citizen. But both doctors disapprove those intentions. They will use all their skills and knowledge to treat even those denounced by the society and ruling elite. They will proudly admit treating a rebel. Captain Blood's revelation that "my business was with his wounds, not his politics," makes a strong case for philanthropy and communal solidarity being inseparable from patriotism. Both Dr. Mudd and Dr. Blood serve their fellowmen and humanity. Their heroic acts are "far above and beyond the demands of duty," as the commander of the prison acknowledges in a letter to the U.S. president when asking a pardon for Dr. Mudd. However, they don't reject their origin. They are fond of the country they so dearly want to improve and save. But, if a tyrannical authority figure or injustice steps in and demands blind

obedience to the state, i.e., them, they will strike with all their power. Captain Blood contests the idea that England is England (parable to home is home) by angrily adding that "bad king is a bad king". When bloodthirsty king James II is replaced by William III, that means they are no longer slaves, but free men who once again have a home and a country. Not only that Hollywood didn't oppose the category of "people", they welcomed it. Just as the Constitution of the United States includes phrase "We the People" as to affirm political allegiance of all citizens and nationals, Hollywood's the most authoritative filmmakers pursued a similar conviction. "We're the people" speech[34] at the end of *The Grapes of Wrath,* when the Joads assert their allegiance to whole American community, is the best example of Hollywood's "regular fellows" being, as Primoratz tells in his description of patriotism, "a part of a more encompassing narrative." In *Meet John Doe* (1941), another "regular fellow", John Doe, Christ-like figure, encourages his listeners in times of social distress (fascist danger on American soil) by stating that, "in our struggle for freedom, we've hit the canvas many a time, but we always bounced back because we're the people - and we're tough." Even the last line we hear before the carol bells indicate the ending credits and John Doe's rebirth, "There you are, Norton – the people, try and lick that," speaks highly of the dignity these "meek" possess and of the state's, identified with the villain Norton, indifference to communal progress. However, the most daring pre-war articulation of this state-people antagonism appears in an anti-nazi movie *The Man I Married* (1940). In the movie the protagonist, an American art-dealer (played by Joan Bennett), defends the position that the child firstly belongs to his mother, whereas in Germany she is visiting, it belongs to the state (a clear allusion to the Nazi Party indoctrinating youth in an organization called "Hitlerjugend").

True American patriot mustn't submit to mob urges. Movies of the 1930s provided excellent link between mob actions and formation of regimented crowds in those movies that instilled anti-fascist sentiments. Hollywood attacked mob violence, at the time still relevant issue. Many cases of mob actions leading to lynching were reported in the USA during the 1930s. These "mob morality" films were aiming to show how mob rule mocks democratic practices. They proclaimed to show the ugly face of hate spurred by nativist feelings. Two movies that superbly uncover this ill-conceived patriotism are *Fury* (1936) and *Black Legion* (1937). Both are interested with the prelude as well as the aftermath of merciless mob activities. Both resolve their narratives in courtroom, thus including American institution as a spokesman for democracy in a final consideration of what is the abuse of good neighbour ethos. *Fury*

[34] See the Ma Joad's speech on the page number 25.

(1936), originally titled Mob Rule, is the first American and MGM movie of German émigré director Fritz Lang, who fled Germany after his last movie, *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (1933), caused immense discontent among the Nazi officials (especially Goebbels) for its anti-Hitler ideology.

Image from *Fury* (1936)[35]

The story of Fury (1936) revolves around an "average Joe" appropriately named Joe Wilson (Spencer Tracy), who gets falsely accused of a murder and consequently lands in jail. There, the townsfolks have already decided he's guilty, because "in this country people don't land in jail unless they're guilty." They storm the prison where they kill Joe, later only learning that he was innocent. The drama unfolds as they (some 10-20 of them) are being accused of Joe's murder. Lang attacks this small-town naivety that can lead to mob forming. *Fury* (1936) also emphasized, through the meticulous close-ups of all the participants of a lynch mob (women and men, the old and young, each in mode of extreme frenzy), that anybody can get overwhelmed by these drives. Joe, who survived the mob's storming and only pretended to be dead to test their conscience, at the end of the movie notes that what burned with him the night the mob tried to kill him was, "the feeling of pride that this country of mine was different from all others." Although here betrayed, the pride Joe is talking about, the belief America is unique compared to other countries (American exceptionalism) will find its way to the audience when being opposed to evil wrongdoers, first misbehaved tyrants and then the Nazis.

[35] Lack of trust in the American institutions leads to forming of a mob: small-town community ready to storm the prison to kill the alleged kidnapper. The movie exposes mob violence in the USA as an allegory of fascism.

Black Legion (1937) is also a movie that operates on notion that some Americans, when wrongly influenced, betray the feeling of American exceptionalism. *Black Legion* (1937) is much more than a movie on mob violence. The movie follows Frank Taylor (Humphrey Bogart), a working-class family man who loses a job promotion to a "foreigner", and not a better worker, as he claims (we learn the Polish foreigner actually deserves the promotion). To solve his anger and get rid of the humiliation, he falls prey to a demagogue over a radio. This demagogue is very reminiscent of the 1930s American real-life demagogues and as Sager points out "whose voice is modelled after the notorious anti-Semitic radio priest Father Charles Coughlin." (2015: 72) Frank becomes involved with the Legion (KKK-like organization) which causes his absent-mindedness at home and eventually ruining his happy family life. *Black Legio*n (1937) uncovers the false patriotism and the corruption of spirit by it. The call "America for Americans" gets the most unwelcoming meaning and as Bergman describes it perfectly, "at Frank's initiation ceremony we witness how the organization is being used by a Legion superior to make him a profit. This is evident when the man urges Frank to by a revolver and uniform even though Frank refused for proper reasons." (1972: 108)

Image from *Black Legion* (1937)[36]

Selfish opportunism is linked and signalled as a possible cause of xenophobic vigilantism. At the end of the movie, in a last-reel New-Deal-like fashion, we get the ultimate lesson from the judge who is sentencing the members of Black Legion: "your reliance is in love of liberty which God has planted in us; our defence is the spirit that praises liberty as heritage in…everything." This is a lesson in democratic faith. If you negate it, despotism will arise. In

[36] Black Legion is KKK-like organization which forces its member, Frank Taylor (Humphrey Bogart), to accept their xenophobic way of life; nativism is a virus that leads to fascism.

condemning mob violence, these two social-issue movies served as transparent allegories against fascism.

In the more explicit anti-Nazi movies that came after 1939, the mob was being replaced by an even bigger threat: regimented crowds. Formation of regimented crowds in these movies was repugnant to the free-spirited American heroes. In regimented crowds, an individual will surrender to a greater, mechanical group will. In *The Mortal Storm* (1940), those who take part in the singing of an ominous patriotic song "Close Up the Ranks"[37] (i.e., Nazi sympathizers) do so willingly and with robotic commitment, while the man who refuses to sing, a non-Aryan guest in a beer hall that is reminiscent of those where Hitler and him alike started their political careers, receives a beating. In regimented group, all other social bonds are eliminated. The only one that remains is the one to the highest perceived symbol of patriotism, in this case "The Fuhrer". The films created in this tradition all present this false and ill-conceived patriotism. American patriot is against this fanatical nationalism which is ruinous for the humankind and which intends to succumb the rest of the world to its rule. It disintegrates an individual and creates, as Chaplin screams at the end of *The Great Dictator* (1940), "machine men, with machine hearts and machine minds." After they leave their rallies and meetings, the Nazis in the movies such as *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), *The Man I Married* (1940), and *The Mortal Storm* (1940) are still possessed by the logic of the regimented crowd. That is the difference between those individuals and the ones being portrayed in mob actions. The individuals who form a mob after they leave the "scene of a crime" come to some kind of sense (evident in aforementioned examples of *Fury* and *Black Legion*). In his *Meet John Doe* (1941), Capra also suggests the mob insanity is short-term, since the "humane" in each civic-minded individual will prevail. However, even *Meet John Doe* (1941) displays, something stern anti-Nazi movies *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), *The Man I Married* (1940) and *The Mortal Storm* (1940) develop even further: chanting and saluting in unison, parading in quasi-military fashion, and, as Benjamin L. Alpers states, "all supporters are men, identically dressed and of similar size and looks." (2003: 100) Regimented flock doesn't accept diversity among its members and that is why the Nazis in the Hollywood's anti-Nazi movies encourage any potential supporter to give up his individuality and join the political machine.

[37] This American Civil War song and its rendition in *The Mortal Storm* (1940) bears many similarities to the Nazi Party anthem "Horst Wessel Song". Both are infused with a strong feeling of superiority of a single group of people and the idea of blind obedience to flawless leader.

American patriot is against abolishing institutions and the government, which are from fascist point of view futile and even interfering with the "right cause". In *Gabriel over the White House* (1933), a president who abolishes the Congress is a fascist treat. The president, Jud Hammond (Walter Huston), in most of his decisions proves to be a benevolent dictator, but the manipulative power he chooses to use seems often overwhelming for American democratic tradition. In *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), the president of the German-American Bund, Dr. Kassell, the representative of power-driven Nazi society, wants to get rid of the Constitution and Bill of Rights because he sees them as chains to German racial unity. In the movie's finale, attorney Kellog, who is persecuting the spies for their un-American activities, gallantly stands up for America's supreme laws: "America is…a democracy that has a God-given inspiration of free men, determined to defend forever the liberties we have inherited in our Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States." What is often seen in the 1930s Hollywood cinema is the tension between the populist and governing view of justice, which usually ends with a lesson that personal integrity and, as Bergman points, "intuitive justice mean more than the law." (1972: 84) In *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), Lincoln asserts: "I may not know much about law, but I know what's right and what's wrong". He is invoking "the people's" law and order. But he is not really wishing to abolish the judiciary. Even his common-man righteousness derives from, as Neve hailed, "a pioneer family who pass him law books to study them." (1992: 35) This Lincoln wants to restore proper law and subsequently the people's faith in it.

In a similar manner, the outlaw from adventure, swashbuckler and British-Empire movies is illustrating a variety of tendencies a real patriot must possess. He uses all of his strength to restore law and order, and a responsible government. In *Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) the hero must fight foreign invaders who are taking over the throne in the absence of the legitimate king. Robin is a true patriot who will fight for his king without expecting an award, only law enforcement (a pardon for his fellowmen). Because he wishes a pardon and cherishes the eventual knighthood, it is obvious he believes in the benevolent political leadership and the institutions of the 12th century England. All in all, as Hark adds, Robin displays "the efforts of a charismatic individual to restore responsible government and thus secure economic stability to his country." (2007: 120)

Juarez (1939) is a movie which presents the ultimate defence of the institutions of democracy against monarchy. Napoleon III's repulsion over democracy, "rule of the cattle, by the cattle, for the cattle…Abraham Lincoln, parliaments, plebiscites, proletarians...Am I to be destroyed by such filth?", is contrasted to Benito Juarez's belief in democratic principles of the

institutions which a monarchy like Napoleon III's dismisses. This power of the institutions Benito Juarez links to people, and their superiority over "the state": "when a monarch misrules, he changes the people. When a president misrules, the people change him." *Juarez* (1939) shows that a true patriot is against "iron hand" dictators who are restricting liberties and fragmenting society. Megalomaniacs at the top posed huge threats to democracies. In *Beau Geste* (1939) the cruel and sadistic commander in the Foreign Legion, Markoff, as one character from the movie explains "a madman who was expelled from a Siberian penal colony for cruelty," separates the Geste brothers and leads the whole unit to ruin. In *Gunga Din* (1939) demented leader of a cult, Guru, insatiable in his killings and comparing himself to all the great, mad warriors (Caesar and Napoleon), is a danger for the British and local tribes. In *Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) it is the king Richad's brother, regent John, whose treachery poses threat to all free man in 12th century England. In *The Sea Hawk* (1940), it is Phillip II of Spain, who in 16th century Europe wants to enable his country to conquer, as he says, "the New World" (England). All these productions were permeated with an anti-authoritarian sentiment. By 1939 it was, as Smedley observes, "quite common to find films portraying megalomaniacs who posed a threat to peace, freedom and democracy." (2011: 199) Hollywood teaches that political leaders must be quite opposite to Napoleon III, Markoff, Guru and Phillip II: trustworthy, tolerant and open to cooperate. That is why Mickey Rooney in *Boys Town* (1938) cannot become the mayor unless he stops giving false promises. Even a potentially benevolent American dictator, Jud Hammond from *Gabriel over the White House* (1933), cannot be the solution to crisis in America's political leadership because his drastic measures, almost eye-for-an-eye philosophy, lead to bigoted society.

Hollywood feared demagoguery. Political extremists, and consequently revolutions they designed, were considered to be damaging to communal harmony. Hollywood often imagined these demagogues and "social justice fighters" were leading to anarchic behaviour and mob actions. In *Captain Blood* (1935), "despite earlier embrace of violent revolution as an accepted means of fighting tyranny, the outcome of the film positions the film's ideology firmly on the side of nonviolent regime change." (Hark 2007: 146) The same applies for *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935) and *Marie Antoinette* (1938). Both movies recast the French Revolution as a hostile environment to the happiness of an innocent family. On account of a group of people who call themselves "revolutionaries", but who metastasize into a mob, no individual can ensure a peaceful family life. Aside from the misguided Frank Taylor from *Black Legion* (1937), there were numerous instances of the Hollywood industry debunking hard-bitten "preachers of

justice". In *Little Man, What Now?* (1934), a movie informally part of Borzage's "German trilogy" (followed by *Three Comrades* in 1938 and *The Mortal Storm* in 1940, both exceptionally relevant for later analysis of anti-Nazi and interventionist cause), in the opening scene the viewers are provided with an evident attack on demagoguery. While waiting for his beloved on the street (the post-WWI Germany), Hans eavesdrops an angry socialist gathering condemning the distribution of wealth. Because he couldn't hear everything, he asks a fellow German who attended the gathering what the young enthusiast was preaching about. The guy responds with disbelief and in an ordinary, sincere manner: "he wants to make the rich too poor, and the poor too rich." And in *The Good Earth* (1937), one of the most successful prestige productions in the 1930s Hollywood[38], in the city, a young agitator passes out political leaflets. The protagonist, Wang Lung (Paul Muni), makes the best use of it: he stuffs it into his shoe to fill a hole. In *It Can't Happen Here*, project thoroughly discussed in the chapter "Political censorship before 1939", a demagogue rises to the position of the U.S. president, and with severe consequences for all free and critical citizens. Demagogic politicians were a sinister force of their own even in Capra's populist America. This is best exemplified in *Meet John Doe* (1941). This time, and unusually for Capra, inconvertible magnate D.B. Norton is treacherously accumulating all democratic power for himself, to sell his agenda, and eventually becoming America's dictator.

10. Interventionism

10.1. Hollywood politicizing – laying grounds for interventionist policy

The 1930s Hollywood movie productions reflected the political awakening of the Hollywood community. As already discussed, Roosevelt's presidency coincided with a more politically active filmmaking. The fact is that the Hollywood community in the 1920s, from the studio chiefs to actors, was quite apolitical. Only the stern supporters of the Republican presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover were contributing to the electoral politics or any other small political gubernatorial issue for that matter. The business-oriented Republican Party was closer to the hearts of many movie moguls for obvious reasons. Some, like producer Adolph Zukor, claimed they became Republicans "because all the people they knew were Republicans."

[38] A bestseller novel of the 1930s, set in revolutionary-time China and adapted for the screen as the last project of MGM's most talented producer, Irving Thalberg. A movie that perfectly showcases the disparity of revolutionary times and long-standing values of uncorrupted agrarian way of life, whilst using Muni's idiosyncratic star value.

(Gabler 1988: 315). The truth is, most movie moguls supported the Republican Party because of the prestige and even "aristocratic" facade that came with the membership to such group. Most of the wealthy Americans voted for them. The more conservative values these people cultivated were also what prompted these highly prosperous movie businessmen to join in. Among them the most fervent and influential was Louis B. Mayer. Previous example of his "passion project", The Hardy family series, demonstrated his willingness to serve as a right-hand man to almost exclusively Republican WASP culture. The WASP culture served as a link between Republican politics and Hollywood ideological preferences. But, with Roosevelt's immense power and good relationship with the entire film industry (culminating with Roosevelt's expression of gratitude for well-natured, patriotic and unifying filmmaking at the Oscars in February 1941, even before America's entrance in the WWII), and with the Catholic culture influencing many filmmakers, the WASP culture was shaken. Previous examples of the Warner Brothers cold, hard-bitten and even at times cynical heroes, Capra's "little man" hero and outlaws from adventure movies and westerns, all validate this position. Even heroines in *Stella Dallas* (1937), *Jezebel* (1938), *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and *Kitty Foyle* (1940), proved to some extent that WASP culture was out-dated as a referent for proper social conduct.

Not only high-positioned movie producers acted in the high-stakes US politics. Actors, directors and especially screenwriters were involved. The 1930s was a period of unionization of the studio personnel. The Screen Writers Guild (SWG) was the most powerful organization among the Hollywood workers. SWG's members were fighting for screen credit and freedom of speech in a world conformed to the wishes of its most influential producers. These screenwriters wanted to express their political thoughts that often involved going against the tide. In 1935 the Communist Party USA established a body called League of American Writers (1935-1943), which gathered many influential American writers, journalists, literary critics and Hollywood screenwriters. Writers who are going to leave an impact on Hollywood filmmaking during the 1930s and 1940s, like Dashiell Hammett and Lillian Hellman, were also members of this organization. These artists were advocating for global peace, all while clearly condemning foreign fascist rules. The Hollywood community was stimulated by several factors to become politically more engaged. The devastating socioeconomic effects of the Great Depression motivated some artists to help the public, and one way by doing so was to enact the social drama on screen. Furthermore, the rapid spread of dictatorships in Europe frightened some movie personnel, mostly ones that emigrated from Germany or that still had families back there (e.g., actor Edward G. Robinson, actress Marlene Dietrich, directors Fritz Lang, William

Dieterle and Billy Wilder, composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold). And not just movie players, but prominent German writers like Thomas Mann, Erich Marie Remarque and Bertol Brecht arrived in Los Angeles. They hosted intelligentsia in their new homes and made public speeches against the Nazi rule at organized gatherings.

The first case of Hollywood political regrouping and entering the realm of genuine politics was Sinclair-Merriam gubernatorial campaign of 1934. In 1934, the major studios intervened on the side of the Republican candidate Frank Meriam in his race for California governor. They poured money, forced their studio workers (mostly the most Republican MGM) to contribute by paying the "Merriam tax", and even produced fake newsreels to discredit Upton Sinclair, a socialist writer-politician who was secretly supported by Roosevelt. As Gabler points out, "the Sinclair campaign demonstrated probably better than anything else the political proclivities and activities of the Jewish executives…a reactionary enclave of Jews wearing the fashions of American gentility and giving no quarter to anyone who threatened their pretensions to prestige." (1988: 315) Although Merriam won and became the governor of California, the political activities and wishes of the progressive part of Hollywood community were becoming ever more apparent. Forced contributions for Merriam that many screenwriters, directors and actors had to give, provoked them to become fervent Democratic supporters. As Ross proves, "within two years of Sinclair's defeat, Hollywood turned increasingly Democratic. A poll taken on the eve of the 1936 presidential election found movie industry personnel favouring FDR over Republican Alf Landon by a 6:1 margin." (2011: 77)

Next step for the liberal, New Dealish and pro-interventionist part of the Hollywood community was the forming of the Popular Front, which was actually:

> "a coalition of organizations, all of which had in common four main objectives: to press the Roosevelt administration in the direction of a world anti-fascist alliance, to aid the defenders of democracy and the victims of fascist aggression, to counter the widely perceived threat of domestic fascism, and to defeat the efforts of conservative big business to thwart the trade union movement and block the passage of social reform measures." (Ceplair, Englund 1983: 99-100)

List of sponsors included even some movie moguls or high-ranked producers, like Irving Thalberg, David O. Selznick, Jack Warner and Carl Laemmle. These producers could have given a massive boost to German expatriates' cause and fight against injustices. Among them, Carl Laemmle, Universal Pictures founder, was the most devoted anti-fascist. Laemmle "spent the last years of his life (died in 1939) trying to save victims of the atrocities going on in Europe by bringing European citizens to the United States and employing them in Los Angeles."

(Yogerst 2019: 6) He even engaged in a personal correspondence with the president, by which he aimed, through emphasizing the hardships the Jews must endure in Germany, to stimulate the president into helping them.

The Popular Front enabled the forming of another organization, the Anti-Nazi League. The League was "formed in July 1936 to organize rallies, print pamphlets, and, covertly at first, more boldly as war clouds darkened, inject anti-Nazi propaganda into Hollywood cinema. (Doherty 2013: 206-7) It was also openly calling to boycott German products. They associated Hitler's Germany with, as its full name "for the Defence of American Democracy" suggested, barbaric and unconstitutional conduct. It was headed by one of the most successful screenwriters of the 1930s, Donald Ogden Stewart (with Fritz Lang being one of its founding members). As more Jewish refugees from Europe came to Hollywood, with stories of Franco's atrocities in the Spanish Civil War and the Nazis' anti-Semitic measures, the League was accompanied by other anti-Fascist causes. During the Spanish Civil War, to back the Loyalist cause, Hollywood A-list actors, directors and screenwriters (e.g., John Ford, Paul Muni, Dudley Nichols, Fredric March, James Cagney) founded the Motion Picture Artists Committee to Aid Republican Spain. Even radicals and communists, as Rollins and O'Connor grasp, "now turned to highlighting the traditional American values that united people of diverse backgrounds in opposition to fascism – thus American leftists, some 3 000 of them who went off to Spain in 1936 and 1937 to struggle against Franco and Hitler called themselves the Abraham Lincoln Brigade." (2008: 45) The League also directed a campaign against Vittorio Mussolini (Benito's son) and Leni Riefenstahl (number one Nazi director) when they came to visit Hollywood. Especially considerable was opposition organized against Riefenstahl, as Urwand recounts, "in December 1938, Leni Riefenstahl had been publicly snubbed by all the major studios." (2013: 199) The leftist sympathies of the League members were evident in the League's dispersal after the signing of Stalin-Hitler pact in 1939. All these groups wanted to influence the public opinion and were evidence that Hollywood wasn't as ignorant of the severity of international situation as many wanted to think. These figures are important because many of them participated in the first Hollywood interventionist endeavours. They were substituting the original leftist proletarian school of thought with a more social-democratic attitude, and as Ceplair and Englund point:

> "Virtually all leftists in the thirties shared their conservative opponents' ideological underpinnings: loyalty to, and faith in, the American democratic tradition and its possibilities…but The Right developed an exclusivist and highly class-conscious definition of nationality through its doctrine of Americanism, while the Left stressed the

> "revolutionary" and "original democratic" impulses of the Founding Fathers and documents." (1983: 121)

Hollywood's ideological output was more resembling to what Ceplair and Englund deduced about the leftist affinities during the 1930s. One of the "original democratic impulses of the Founding Fathers" (Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, George Washington etc.) was to fight for liberty and strong federal government. They realized that the war against the Great Britain was inevitable. The nonconformist part of the Hollywood community followed in their footsteps, and regarded opposing the Nazis' methods mandatory. In 1938 the members of the Anti-Nazi League, after one of its rallies, gathered at the actor Edward G. Robinson's home to sign a petition that would "call for a boycott of all German products until the nation ended its aggression toward other nations and stopped persecuting Jews and all minorities." (Ross 2011: 101-2) Recalling the Founding Fathers and their most everlasting document, they called it Declaration of Democratic Independence. They sent it to the Congress and president. It was the industry's most remarkable public statement on the issue of Nazism up to that point.

10.2. Isolationist – interventionist debate

Isolationist-interventionist debate is one which should never be ignored when creating a decent study of Hollywood's political and ideological output in the period of 1933-1941. The debate revolves around the question of USA's involvement in world affairs, and after 1939 in an impending world war. General consensus is that the first years of the New Deal were the years of American isolationism. What validates this position is a series of Neutrality acts that were passed by the president and U.S. Congress, from 1935 to the last declaration of neutrality, signed on 15th September 1939. Each of these acts was created to discourage the American populace in engaging in any kind of anti-Nazi activity. During those years, the U.S. official isolationist policy gave a boost to the western European countries' policy of appeasement, i.e., giving into and not sanctioning Hitler's early territorial and military occupations. As the international situation deteriorated during the 1930s, the isolationist voices in the U.S. Senate and Congress were becoming less convincing. It was obvious, as Slotkin supports, that with the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany, the Roosevelt administration couldn't "successfully pursue monetary and trade policies in isolation." (1998: 286)

Roosevelt's political rhetoric stressed "good neighbour" relations with Latin America, but also the preservation of the democratic states of the Western Hemisphere. His later public speeches were strongly condemning dictatorships in Europe, usually calling them systems of managements in which minorities ruled. In this context, Roosevelt's famous "Arsenal of democracy" speech (delivered on 29th December 1940 and authorship credited to ardent anti-Nazi Robert E. Sherwood) is the most indicative of Roosevelt and his administration's genuine worldview, with its unambiguous militant and interventionist tone. One more evidence to Roosevelt's interventionist attitude infiltrating the Hollywood output is offered by Giuliana Muscio. She claims that Roosevelt's decision to postpone the passing of anti-trust laws[39] which would contest the vertical integration and monopolistic control of the market by the Hollywood studios, is a proof of friendly relationship between his cabinet and Hollywood moguls. Muscio points out that Roosevelt could have intimidated Hollywood through "exchange of favours into spreading interventionist sensitivities." (1996: 103) It is safe to assume that the president's policies could have had bigger impact on cinematic propaganda work after the moguls narrowly escaped the harrowing possibility that their distributional and exhibition practices might have been contested. The issue of the actual scope of the cooperation between Roosevelt and the Hollywood industry is still unresolved. Nonetheless, Hollywood politically-engaged productions of the late 1930s and early 1940s corresponded to the changes in Roosevelt's foreign policy. A clear departure from the isolationist policy was the new legislation the Roosevelt administration introduced in March of 1941. They put forth Lend-Lease Act, which favoured providing military aid to Great Britain. The new act proved to be another encouragement for Hollywood to speak up for the interventionist cause.

Isolationism is by nature an approach that dismisses taking any action. It longs for retaining political status quo and not interfering in the affairs that don't concern nation's interests. Being passive is by nature contradictory to the Golden Age Hollywood heroes. The only way to make an isolationist subject appealing to audience was to create interventionist villains whose evil warmongering must be stopped. Yet, Hollywood didn't produce these kinds of pictures, with a few exceptions that shaped its villains to accommodate a more anti-chauvinistic credence. In Capra's *You Can't Take It with You* (1938), the anti-hero who will in Capra's populist matter get converted, Mr. Kirby (played by Edward Arnold, a regular villain) deals in munition, and, as Dick observed "munitions magnates were, of course, considered

[39] Anti-trust suit was filed by the U.S. Department of Justice in 1938 against all of the "Big Eight" studios, with Paramount Pictures being the principal defendant. Only after the Second World War will it be resolved.

villains during the isolationist 1930s." (2010: 79) In Walter Wanger's *The President Vanishes* (1934), fascist-like masterminds who are advocating war involvement are only doing it to sell armament. In similar fashion, in MGM's *Idiot's Delight* (1939), the villain is Achille Weber, an armament manufacturer who in the midst of allegorical fascist invasion of a free, democratic state (in the play it is France who is under siege) is selling weapons to the invaders (i.e., Italians) who will, as the movie unambivalently preaches, kill thousands of civilians. Nevertheless, all these exceptions were more pacifist in spirit, than isolationist. They primarily attacked fascist militarism unique to the 1930s totalitarian regimes. And Hitler's ever-growing offensive on ethnic, racial and religious minorities made the pacifist message of keeping peace while ignoring strong war cries seem foolish.

Smedley in his book *A Divided World: Hollywood Cinema and Émigré Directors in the Era of Roosevelt and Hitler, 1933-1948*, perfectly encapsulates the matter of "change of heart" when it comes to more liberal and interventionist thinking among Hollywood community:

> "Before Hitler came to power, pacifism enjoyed a close relationship with liberalism and Hollywood depicted warfare as destructive and dehumanizing. After the rise of Hitler, however, liberals began to associate warfare with anti-fascism and to see conflict as a way to protect human rights - war could be an ennobling activity. Following this political regrouping, pacifism - in the sense of non-intervention in European affairs- passed to the isolationist right." (2011: 199)

The depiction of warfare as either overtly dehumanizing or ennobling is definitely one way to determine the actual stance the movie supports. The general rule is that pacifists avoid war for humanitarian reasons, and isolationists out of a sense of national priority. The regrouping that Smedley talked about was evident even in the movies that were thought by some to be plain anti-war propaganda.

In anti-war, or ideologically ambivalent war films, it is the high-ranking military authority, not only the enemy, which is marked as responsible for the suffering and death of the men in units. Hollywood didn't produce clear-cut anti-war pictures similar to immensely successful adaptation of Remarque's highly regarded *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930) during this period that would claim, as the protagonist Paul Baumer realizes, "when it comes to dying for your country, it's better not to die at all." There were some ambivalent movies, like the aforementioned *The President Vanishes* (1934) and *Idiot's Delight* (1939), but even they subtly provided interventionist sentiments. The former is an ideal example of how important it is to take into account all the background production facts and figures. *The President Vanishes* (1934) was produced by Walter Wanger and distributed by Paramount Pictures. It is a

dramatization of a conflict between peace-loving president and his war-profiteering ministry cabinet. It was championed as "a splendid peace document" that showed how wars are made and who profits from them, but Wanger was hardly a pacifist, or even an isolationist. His ideological purpose was "to address what he saw as the threat of fascism in the United States," and, "the pacifist message had been added to the opening and closing purely as "bookends" to the film." (Rollins, O'Connor 2008: 204) Four more facts prove that the movie couldn't have a real isolationist intention. Firstly, Wanger will later produce *Blockade* (1938) and *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), two movies that wanted to raise the public awareness on the issue of anti-fascism. Secondly, Wanger's activities in the anti-Nazi league prove he was a committed interventionist. Thirdly, sociologist Leo Rosten's testimony after a visit to Hollywood in 1939, during which he "approved the courageous stand Warner Bros. and independent producer Walter Wanger took against anti-fascist activities and even predating the swing in American public opinion and diplomacy." (Birdwell 1999: 23) Ultimately, the political essays Wanger published in "*Foreign Affairs* in October 1939, urging studio executives to take firmer stands regarding the tense world situation," (Bennett 2002: 85) make him a genuine supporter of interventionism. On the other hand, *Idiot's Delight* (1939) is a movie based on a play written by Robert E. Sherwood, playwright whose *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* was filmed just year after this movie and which intones the creed of Roosevelt's New Deal democracy even more than *Idiot's Delight*. And not just the New Deal, but equally the interventionist course of action. In the movie's famous Douglas-Lincoln debate sequence, after Douglas concludes that each state should mind its own business (a clear isolationist belief), Abe Lincoln expresses his hatred over that "complacent policy of indifference to evil." Abe also lectures about the enemies of free institutions everywhere in the world and the mistreatment of minorities in the 19th century America (mentions "the Negroes, foreigners and Jews", giving it a contemporary significance). His wish that America becomes "the encouragement of the world," makes Abe a true interventionist hero. Unlike *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, the play *Idiot's Delight* has a contemporary setting and follows a group of guests stuck in a hotel in Italy just at the brink of a new World War. The war is provoked by fascists and, as the play unambiguously states, it is Italy who attacks France. The censors, led by Breen, sensed it would definitely be viewed as anti-fascist piece, but feared even more it could disturb Italy. What disturbed the censors even more was Mr. Sherwood's direct standpoint. When asked if he had any collaborators, he ruefully replied, "Yes – Mussolini". With the rule "Hollywood won't pass judgment on other nations" (nowadays, many would compare this policy to "political correctness" which dominates 21st century political discourse) still intact, MGM executives ordered the foreign dialogue in *Idiot's*

Delight (1939) be done in Esperanto and not Italian. Moreover, the movie was to be set in Italy, but the producers moved it to an obscure hotel at "the border" (what seems are Swiss-Alps). The play's actual ending, Harry (Clark Gable) and Irene (Norma Shearer) singing "Onward, Christian Soldiers", was changed for one less militant and interventionist, the two singing a prayer "God, Abide with Me", accentuating the darkness that veiled the world. (Doherty 2013: 215) Breen said that "the play is fundamentally anti-war propaganda, and contains numerous diatribes against militarism, fascism and the munitions ring." (Leff, Simmons 2001: 84) Frank Nugent of *The New York Times* agreed, and had written that the story is "as timely as tomorrow's front page" and that it "exposes the essential idiocy and pointlessness of militarism."[40] On the surface, the movie was meant to be a definite pacifist and anti-war statement, highlighted by a plain soldier's observation that he doesn't know who will win the war, but he's sure that it will be like the last time (WWI), "whoever wins, my country loses". But, having in mind who wrote it, and the official PCA policy it had to conform to, it can more accurately be characterized, as Whiteclay Chambers II stressed, "not as antiwar, but as an early challenge to Hitlerism by Hollywood." (Rollins, O'Connor 2008: 211) And as Muscio points out, the author Robert Sherwood was "a New Dealer and a fervent interventionist. He worked for years as Roosevelt's ghost-writer." (1996: 62) He contributed to some of the most important Roosevelt's speeches in the 1940s.

Hollywood during the 1930s produced a small number of war movies. The main reason behind it was a financial one: not to endanger any of its European markets. An additional reason was the division within the American public and politicians regarding the previous, Great War. The question whether it was necessary for the United States to participate in the First World War was still a relevant issue. At first, Hollywood filmmakers exercised restraint in expressing interventionist tendencies. Few noted movies, especially the British-Empire and adventures movies, from 1935 and 1936, glorified war. They were not direct call to militarization, but they displayed the necessity of violent counter attack to defeat tyrannical forces. In the first portrayals of tyrannical rulers, from *Captain Blood* (1935) to *Beau Geste* (1939), corrupt regimes are represented less as political problems than as problems of businesses with poor management or modus operandi. Therefore, first genuine interventionists reacted to ideological threats, not military; they feared that such evil could arise in the USA. This was the model for creating politically-conscious movies that could deal with themes that were of actual urgency,

[40] https://www.nytimes.com/1939/02/03/archives/the-screen-robert-sherwoods-idiots-delight-opens-at-capitol-torchy.html (Last retrieved on 22nd August 2023)

"inspired" by the rise of the Nazi party in Germany. Amongst those themes, the most pressing issue was the persecution of ethnic, political or religious minorities (principally Jews).

The Nazis' most repressive political measures were directed towards the Jewish community. Hollywood definitely failed to address the issue. One reason is that Hollywood intended to ignore ethnic properties for the sake of homogenising film characters. Another possible reason, that many studio bosses would be pleased to give, is that they didn't know the scope of the Nazi racial policies. One incident gives evidence to this mode of thinking. The MGM's most acclaimed 1930s producer, Irving Thalberg, visited Germany in 1934 to check how their offices were managing. Upon his return to the USA, Thalberg expressed his awareness of the harms Jews have to put up with, yet with a bad judgement: "upon returning from Germany in 1934, Irving Thalberg told Louis B. Mayer that "a lot of Jews will lose their lives" but "Hitler and Hitlerism will pass; the Jews will still be there." (Ross 2011: 100) When realizing that the press was full of the stories of Nazi brutality and that Hollywood studios had their offices in Germany which employed hundreds of people, amongst them Jews, who will have to be discharged as situation for them worsened, it's hard to embrace this pleading to ignorance.

Ben Urwand's estimation, that "from 1900 to 1929, there had been around 230 movies about Jews, and in a variety of roles – as pawnshop owners, clothing merchants, sweatshop workers, historical and biblical personalities, and hilarious tricksters", (2013: 73) seems outrageous when comparing to how many were appearing between 1933 and 1941, especially before the Nazi invasion of Poland (September 1939). Jews as characters, Jewishness as identity and Judaism as religion have been almost completely absent from the screen. Birdwell attributes this to two reasons: first, "the conscious efforts of moguls' attempts at assimilation", and second "ever-more-hostile (anti-Semitic) environment". (1999: 16) This environment cultivated a strong WASP prejudice of "international Jewish banker", who is in control of the world's finances. The PCA's Catholic bureaucrats at charge and Breen's own anti-Semitic outbursts definitely had also an impact.[41] Before the theme of Jewishness disappeared from the

[41] Even today it is not sure if Breen cultivated a real hate or dislike of Jews. Some speak of change of heart or softening his earlier convictions. In some earlier letters, Breen had professed his prejudices, as professor Thomas Doherty verifies by analysing Breen's personal correspondence. A letter from 1932 conveys: "These Jews seem to think of nothing but money making and sexual indulgence…Ninety-five percent of these folks are Jews of an Eastern European lineage. They are, probably, the scum of the scum of the earth." The truth is that any kind of propaganda and radicalism was extremely disturbing for Breen. Another fact that can absolve Breen is that movie plots couldn't revolve around marginal groups during the Golden Age Hollywood, and Jews fit in this model. https://forward.com/culture/12234/was-hollywood-s-famed-censor-an-antisemite-00948/ (Last retrieved on: 25th August 2023)

mainstream Hollywood filmmaking, Darryl Zanuck produced *The House of Rothschild* (1934). The film is a story of Jewish banker family who helped the Great Britain to defeat Napoleon.

Image from *The House of Rothschild* (1934)[42]

The film, more than attacking anti-Semitism (Rothschild brothers' enemy is anti-Semitic German count who accuses them of warmongering), emphasizes the benefits of patriarchal family and sticking together in order to "walk the world with dignity." Still, the Rothschilds want to eradicate restrictions placed upon Jews. Ben Urwand notices that the Rothschilds' struggles for equal rights in the 19th century provided "a perfect parallel for what was happening in Germany," especially Nathan Rothschild's lecture: "Go into the Jewish quarter of any town in Prussia today, and you'll see men lying dead…for but one crime: that they were Jews." (2013: 77)

10.3. Political censorship before 1939 – the studios and PCA silencing filmmakers, eliminating Jewishness and allusion to Nazi danger

After *The House of Rothschild* (1934), and until *The Great Dictator* (1940), bringing forth anti-Semitic subject or just including Jewish identity of a character was difficult. Why were at first the studios silent on the Nazi menace? Many film historians listed different reasons, varying from strong economic motivation to ideological pressure on American soil. Some key

[42] Nathan Rothschild (George Arliss) in the 19th century Germany, visiting the ghetto where the public is rioting against the Jews (paralleling Hitler's SA troops).

conclusions can be drawn, as following: first, the producers were afraid of the accusations that they are spreading Jewish propaganda (fitting into the image of the "international Jewish banker" and Jewish control of the movie business by industry nepotism). Anti-Semitism was a serious issue in the 1930s America. Religious and national prejudices were spurred by many high-ranking politicians and well-known Americans (e.g., Henry Ford, Father Coughlin, Theodore Dreiser and Charles Lindbergh). Street rallies of Nazi and pro-German groups were nothing unusual. The German-American Bund, for example, held a rally at Madison Square Garden in New York on February 20, 1939, and "approximately seventeen thousand people crammed into the Garden to hear the pro-Nazi rhetoric." (Birdwell 1999: 199) Second, movies that would promote anti-Nazi feelings could strengthen the resistance of Nazi sympathizers. They could have been irritated by the claims of their role models' inhuman behaviour. Third, the isolationists and pacifists could accuse them of warmongering. And fourth, neutrality and avoiding anti-Nazi themes was financially sound. Many moguls, Louis B. Mayer in particular, didn't want to risk studio profits by engaging in any political controversy that threatened at the beginning of 1930s still highly lucrative foreign markets.

To begin with, there were projects on the topic of Adolf Hitler, the Nazis and anti-Semitism that American audiences could have watched onscreen from 1933 onwards, but didn't. *The Mad Dog of Europe* and *It Can't Happen Here*, were two projects that should have had an ever-lasting political significance, but were never filmed. These cautionary tales wanted to address what other movies failed to at the beginning of Hitler's reign of terror: anti-Semitism and totalitarianism. *The Mad Dog of Europe* was written by Herman Mankiewicz, another Jewish writer determined to unmask the Nazis and in particular Hitler's cruel nature. The story was a double threat: drama of a Jewish family in the times of Hitler's rise to power. The first page of the script handed in by Mankiewicz's successors exhibited a tremendous audacity and communicated the urgency of the present-day situation: "This picture is produced in the interests of democracy, an idea which has inspired the noblest deeds of man. Today the greater part of the civilized world has reached this staged of enlightenment." (Urwand 2013: 64) This was the first movie that wanted to inform the public of the real implications of Hitler's reign and his racial policies. As Doherty asserts, the film, through newsreel footage, should have shown "concentration camps and street riots", and a number of real-life Nazi barbarian and fascist deeds like "arson attack on Reichstag and book burnings which would culminate with the burning of the Bible." (2013: 357) For years, the Breen's office hesitated to give the moviemakers the necessary approval to put the movie into production. The censors believed

the moviemakers were trying to use the screen for their own personal propaganda purposes. This fits the narrative of Hollywood trying to reconcile pragmatic business dealing and propriety it stood for by means of the Production Code. The PCA was under pressure of German officials, and as Ben Urwand explains in his book *The Collaboration: Hollywood's Pact with Hitler*, Hollywood studios and bosses were collaborating by making sure that all the cuts that the German embassy (lead by their diplomat in Los Angeles, Georg Gyssling) requested of films of questionable subject and content be done. The truth is, Urwand's assessment that the studios, in particular United Artists and Warner Brothers who had been banned from Germany in 1933 and 1934, had nothing to lose by making anti-Nazi pictures, and they may even have had something to gain, is altogether unfounded. Hollywood moguls primarily restrained from propagandizing on screen because of still strong pro-German and anti-Semitic sentiments shared by some high-profile American citizens.

The other major anti-Nazi project, entitled *It Can't Happen Here*, is a story about a fascist takeover of America. It was written by Sinclair Lewis in 1935. In February 1936, MGM purchased rights to it and put it in preproduction. Lewis wrote the novel and screenplay because he was determined to share his wife's (Dorothy Thompson) unique anti-Hitler impression. Thompson was a newspaper correspondent in Germany whom the Nazis regarded as persona non grata and expelled her in 1934 for her unpleasant reports on the Nazi customs. The spouses were most of all concerned with the relation between American liberal prospect and modern totalitarianism. The novel and play *It Can't Happen Here* was a culmination of Lewis' anti-fascist and dystopian writing. The screenwriters who were adapting it, wanted to stay faithful to the source material. Thus, at least two markets were definitely jeopardized (German and Italian). When the screenplay got submitted to the PCA, Joseph Breen wrote to Will Hays that it is: "Hitlerization of the United States of America". Breen didn't hesitate to intervene, and shortly after "requested sixty sets of cuts, an outrageous number that proved political unsuitability." (Urwand 2013: 171)

Image of the uncompleted movie project *It Can't Happen Here*.[43]

The story revolves around a dangerous demagogue, senator Windrip, who legally ascended to the dictatorship in a not-too-distant future (the source novel portrays Windrip defeating current president, Roosevelt, making it more ominous). Windrip adopted many of Hitler's methods: he recruited storm troopers to terrorize opponents, took control of the press, created an official salute, and became known as "the Chief". The hero, the countering force to Windrip, at the end of the film script passionately defends traditional American values:

> "More and more, as I think about history," his hero concluded, "I am convinced that everything that is worthwhile in the world has been accomplished by the free, inquiring, critical spirit, and that the preservation of this spirit is more important than any social system whatsoever. But the men of ritual and the men of barbarism are capable of shutting up the men of science and of silencing them forever." (Urwand 2013: 162-3)

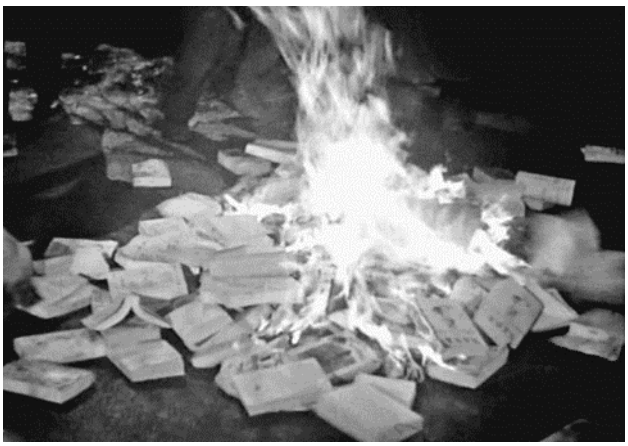
"Critical spirit" the hero cries for, is linked to the need for moral regeneration more than "any change of social system". Nevertheless, it was planned to finish the movie on a negative, yet echoing a populist note: where the system ends, the heart begins. This was in accordance with the New Deal cinema and populist tradition of Frank Capra, especially with his campaign against domestic form of fascism, manifested much later in *Meet John Doe* (1941).

During the 1930s, certain movies, many of them previously discussed, had attempted to uncover the immoral and inhuman nature of Nazi regime by alluding to Nazi political goals.

[43] Lewis Sinclair cancelled project; poster for the theatre production, showing clear signs of "Hitlerization of the United States".

These movies wanted to show why Hitler must be fought through historical allegory. One of those goals was the extermination of the Jewish race.

One widely praised movie previously discussed had shaped its story around a case of anti-Semitism: *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937). Although the main character, Emile Zola, isn't a Jew, he is defending a real-time Jew, officer Alfred Dreyfuss (conveniently played by a Jewish actor Joseph Schildkraut), from hate-driven French army.



Images from *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937)[44]

Even from the history lessons it is clear that Dreyfuss was singled out because of his Jewishness, but the PCA wouldn't tolerate even that. Here is what Joseph Breen came up with to avoid any references to Jewishness: "Scene 80: Start the speech of the Chief of Staff with "He's a man!..." losing the line "And a Jew!"; Scene 190: Do not use the word "Jew" in the speech by the Commander of Paris. Use Dreyfus' name instead.; Scene 235: Use Dreyfus' name

[44] The first image shows Alfred Dreyfus' Jewish origin. The second image shows the burning of Zola's books organized by the French officials and military figures who are discriminating him on the grounds of different political persuasion and creed. All these are clear political parables to the Nazi regime.

here again instead of "…that Jew." (Urwand 2013: 180) However, one shot included a reference to Dreyfuss' Jewishness and anti-Semitism, on a printed page. When a French officer looks at the officers list, we can see that by Dreyfuss' name stands under religion: Jew. It is hard to say if this single shot is an act of resistance to the PCA or an accident that stayed unnoticed. But, if we take into account other political allusions to the Nazi regime visible in the movie, like the book burnings (in the movie, Zola's books are being burned down), and Zola's unequivocal indictment of those under xenophobic spell (Zola will "keep on pricking the conscience of the world"), we can rightly assume that Zola is an interventionist hero. *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet* (1940) follows a similar pattern (another Dieterle biopic, again produced by the Warner Brothers). The movie assumes anti-authoritarian frame of mind and intends to show why Hitler must be fought by celebrating the life and achievements of a real-time German-Jewish scientist and Nobel laureate. In the movie, while trying to invent a cure for syphilis, Paul Ehrlich fights enemies of science, German officials, who are unmistakably exhibiting anti-Semitic prejudices. Ehrlich's work was actually discredited by the Nazis, and this movie wanted to bring forth the idea that, generally, "the Nazi pogrom deprived the world of people whose talents could change life for the better." (Birdwell 1999: 81)

Other obvious Nazi political goal was territorial expansion at the expense of sovereign countries. As the decade progressed, the politics in many adventure movies moved from the background to foreground. The behaviour of rulers in these stories radicalized. They were often clearly linked to Hitler or Nazis, and their world-conquering appetite. As screenwriter Wolfgang Reinhardt explained to producer Henry Blanke on a movie he wrote, *Juarez* (1939), "every child must be able to realize that Napoleon III with his intervention in Mexico is none other than Hitler plus Mussolini with their adventure in Spain." (Vasey 1997: 156) In *The Sea Hawk* (1940), queen Elizabeth is portrayed as an enlightened ruler who at first doesn't want to retaliate on Spain and its king. But, in the film's coda, she picks up: "when the ruthless ambitions of a man threaten to engulf the world, it becomes the solemn obligation of all free men to affirm that the earth belongs not to any one man, but to all men." Elizabeth proves that patriotism can come hand in hand with universal justice and common human solidarity, and renders interventionism against, as Doherty puts it, "expansionist, totalitarian forces of the Hitlerian Spanish monarch on behalf of besieged and freedom-loving England," (2013: 358) as a moral obligation. Apart from Napoleon III and Phillip II of Spain, Napoleon Bonaparte was understood as a "Hitlerian monarch" in an Anglo-American co-production, *That Hamilton Woman* (1941). A movie which, according to Bennett, Churchill adored for its propagandistic

qualities, aimed to "restore confidence in Britain's navy power, a theme which corresponded perfectly to present-day situation." (2012: 76) Napoleon is exposed as Hitler, as both men will not stop until they rule the world. In *That Hamilton Woman* (1941), the interventionist hero is the British admiral Horatio Nelson (Laurence Olivier), one of the greatest military heroes in English history, who in his culminating war speech at the end of the movie implores his fellow countrymen to stand against Napoleon, because, as he says, "you cannot make peace with dictators. You have to destroy them, wipe them out."

The political censorship of *The Road Back* (1937), *Three Comrades* (1938) and *Blockade* (1938) is of utmost importance in understanding how interventionism lured, yet got rejected for conformist approach of studio politics. Political censorship in the 1930s Hollywood was unique, in the sense that the PCA and Breen's office, from an official point of view, didn't have the last word. As Ruth Vasey assesses by quoting from PCA's manual, "the Code didn't have much to say on the subject of foreign relations, requiring only that the history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be represented fairly." (1997: 142) They could, and did, find no objection to a potentially subversive movie plot which carefully selected the setting and place, deleting any material critical of real-life politicians or regimes. In those cases, they still listened to various domestic pressure groups or foreign embassies, most active being the German. As Ben Urwand proves, *The Road Back* (1937) was a movie project that had to withstand a tremendous pressure from the German officials and Hays office because it dealt with post-WWI Germany. Just like *Little Man, What Now?* (1934), the movie was an adaptation of a novel by a German author and it originally had depicted Nazi thugs, SA troopers in particular, as a grave danger to peace. Because of its sensitive content, Nazi official and consul in Los Angeles Georg Gyssling, "sent letters to over 60 cast members, warning them that any future films of theirs would not be shown in Germany." (Urwand 2013: 183) This resulted in the movie being, as Doherty put it, "toothless and tired." (2013: 221) Playing up the comedy and romance, while silencing the rapid militarization in Germany during the 1930s, against the wishes of its director James Whale, was bewildering to many reviewers.[45] After Universal's *The Road Back* (1937), another movie had a similar fate. *Three Comrades* (1938) was a movie produced by Joseph Mankiewicz (for the MGM studio), the brother of the aforementioned

[45] The most noteworthy reviewers of the time (Nugent, Greene, Mosher) agreed that the final version was plainly melodramatic and that the conclusion was unsatisfying and inconclusive. However, in 1939, *The Road Back* was re-released, with added footage that made it more explicitly anti-Nazi, and included a montage featuring an actor playing Hitler. This fact is proof that Hollywood filmmakers and censors were more willing to openly address dangers the Nazi regime posed as the international situation regressed.

fervent anti-Nazi Herman Mankiewicz. Both *The Road Back* and *Three Comrades* were novels written by Erich Marie Remarque, a German author whose works were deemed unpatriotic by the Nazi regime and insulting to the German people.[46] *Three Comrades* (1938) was the second part of Borzage's informal "German" trilogy, which provided a stronger anti-Nazi sentiment than the earlier one, *Little Man, What Now?* (1934). The movie was set in the early 1920s Berlin, and not the late 1920s as the novel frames. In the late 1920s the Nazis were emerging as a significant political force, whereas the early 1920s were, from censor's point of view, far enough to avoid the current European political calamities. The departure from pacifism is apparent in this Borzage movie, even more evident when taking into account what the censors and MGM chief Mayer did. Roffman and Purdy write of Breen's solution to interventionist message in *Three Comrades* (1938), and note that it was in accordance with Louis B. Mayer: "slightly alter the film to indicate not the rise of Nazism but of Communism…according to magazine *Time*, other alterations included the removal of the scenes depicting the Jewish problem and political book burnings…" (1981: 211) Even images of swastika were avoided. Original ending written by Francis Scott Fitzgerald, whose version of the screenplay was already crippled, intended, as Roffman and Purdy witness, "that the protagonists remain in Germany to fight for preserving democracy." (1981: 210) Fitzgerald's version clearly stressed interventionist course of action, yet in the final version that reached the screen, Otto and Erich, accompanied with the ghosts of the third comrade (Gottfried) and their damsel Pat, are actually walking away from Berlin, to South America.

As the international circumstances worsened, some film players inside Hollywood found it necessary to express their support for the preservation of democratic (not necessarily elected in their respective countries) sovereignty. It has already been pointed out that few prominent Hollywood artists managed to form groups and held rallies that would increase public awareness and even financially help the oppressed people of Spain during, what would history remember as the prelude to WWII, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). However, making it more public, i.e. producing movies for an interventionist cause, was for many out of the question. Birdwell accurately labelled Hollywood filmmakers during these times as: "politically ambivalent and serving mostly their own interest…Though they considered Hitler evil and threatening, they were largely ambivalent concerning the Spanish Civil War and

[46] The screenings of Hollywood's adaptation of Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), which is essentially a prequel to *Road Back* and *Three Comrades*, were boycotted by the Nazis in Germany even before they came to power. In the Nazi book-burning frenzy (1933), Remarque's works will also be among those singled out as threatening to the Nazi image.

uninterested in Japanese attempts to create the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere." (1999: 31) Within the context of the Spanish Civil War, the fear of being accused of maintaining communist sympathies or being even against the church (after all, in Spain the church was on Franco's side) was beyond any doubt an overwhelming issue for many Americans. Nonetheless, some American intellectuals, led by writers Ernest Hemingway, John dos Passos and Lillian Hellman, wanted via film educate the public and demonstrate who are the defenders of the republic and legitimate holders of the Spanish land. They funded Dutch documentary filmmaker Joris Ivens and in due course made a relentless and sharp visual document, entitled *The Spanish Earth* (1937), that strikingly portrayed the disaster brought by fascist allies, i.e. numerous deaths that will, as Hemingway speaks in voice over narration, "come to all who have no place to run, no place to hide." This project definitely aimed at soliciting greater aid from Americans. As one reviewer in *The New York Times* wrote, "the most rational appeal the screen thus far has presented for the cause of Spanish democracy," and due to Hemingway's narrative "a definitely propagandist effort."[47] Meanwhile, in mainstream Hollywood, Walter Wanger was the only producer ready to approach at length the subject of Spanish Civil War. *Blockade* (1938), was the only A-production Hollywood movie genuinely interested in the causes and bloody aftermath of the Spanish Civil War (1936-9).[48] It was directed by the aforementioned well-known anti-fascist director, William Dieterle, and starred Henry Fonda. Fonda's public image, which corresponded to his screen personality, fittingly characterized by, as Dickstein understands, "plain-man decency, simplicity, sincerity and uncompromising integrity," (2009: 459) and Dieterle's German origin and willingness to financially support German exile community in Hollywood added to the seriousness of the matter. Fonda's cries and warnings which the movie was full of, should have had an enduring power over the audience. From the start, the movie was viewed as potentially damaging to the USA and Hollywood's formal neutrality. The omnipresent ruins and disorder ravaging made the picture seem truly faithful to the reality, as the movie capitalized on German bombardment of cities such as Guernica and Barcelona. Breen asked of the production "not to definitely identify any of the combatants with either faction of the Spanish Civil war." (Shindler 1996: 191) It had to be as apolitical as possible, so different regalia that could symbolize good or bad forces had to be omitted. For example, no uniform should have been accurate. In addition, "the words fascists, Franco,

[47] https://www.nytimes.com/1937/08/21/archives/the-screen-the-spanish-earth-at-the-55th-st-playhouse-is-a-plea-for.html (Last retrieved on 2nd September 2023)

[48] A year before, Paramount Pictures released *The Last Train to Madrid* (1937) and Twentieth Century Fox *Love Under Fire* (1937). Both movies were minor pictures for the studios. The stories play out as melodramas that stress neutrality in the political conflict and carefully construct the story of escape in the realm of romantic thrillers.

Communists, and Loyalists were never mentioned." (Rollins, O'Connor 2008: 210). Still, the message of massacre that needs to be stopped would find its way to the audience. At the end of the movie, Marco (Henry Fonda), an ordinary farmer who, somewhere in Spain, tries to protect his land in the midst of a siege, breaks the fourth wall by directly begging the audience:

> "Our country's 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, 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?" (*Blockade*, 1938)

Image from *Blockade* (1938)[49]

The ending was somewhat bewildering: some grasped it as a cry for peace, while others embraced its anti-fascist sentiment and found it openly calling to give hand in the struggle of the oppressed, in this case the Loyalists. Marco teaches us this is a new kind of war: one which is slaughtering civilians ("It's not war. War is between soldiers! It's murder!") and one which is not only in the front lines (as Marco's superior officer asserts: "It's in every street"). The real-life German bombardment of the civilian population, something already addressed by the press, made the fictional portrayal of villagers suffering sufficiently credible. In the end, *Blockade* (1938), as well as *The Road Back* (1937) and *Three Comrades* (1938), acknowledges and condemns the current armament, but it doesn't single out any particular country. Essentially, all three movies support anti-war cause, but the portrayal of madness which somebody must stop, and as Marco suggests that somebody is "the world", makes them unapologetically interventionist.

[49] Marco (Henry Fonda) delivering his plea to the world at the end of the movie, in the presence of his damsel, Russian Norma (Madeleine Carroll), who gets swayed by his passionate solicitation and changes side (from a spy working for the forces allied with Franco, to a supporter of the rebel's army).

Although the Breen's office was careful in its demands, propaganda in favour of one side bypassed the censors. As Legion of Decency testified, *Blockade* (1938) was dangerous because of its communist propaganda infiltrating, and its "false, atheistic and immoral doctrines."[50] (Thorp 1939: 212) The censors had a challenging task from the beginning as they viewed the contribution of some, like John Howard Lawson's contribution to the screenplay, problematic due to their association with the Communist Party. When the aforementioned case of *Idiot's Delight* (1939) is added to this list, it is safe to assume that before the WWII starts, in September 1939 by Great Britain's declaration of war, Hollywood's interventionist cries were still not expressed in precise or simpler terms.

Hollywood's interventionist sympathies were clear as approving portrayals of the British history, politics and people increased. The growing number of British-Empire stories and Rudyard Kipling adaptations suggest Anglo-American relations being at the all-time high. Even Margaret Farrand Thorp in her book *America at the Movies* published in 1939 already noticed this trend: "Some historian of the future may one day be surprised to discover that in the late 1930's the American motion picture industry made a large group of films glorifying every aspect of British virtue," and she added to this values they were certainly advising, "loyalty as the supreme virtue no matter to what you are loyal, courage, hard work, a creed in which noblesse oblige is the most intellectual conception." (Thorp 1939: 294-5) George Stevens' *Gunga Din* (1939), based on one of Kipling's poems that celebrates an Indian soldier's gallant and outstanding service, with a dash of "The Three Musketeers" glamour, is an ideal example of those pro-British affinities. The movie shows the titular character who sacrifices his life for the right cause, helping the Brits to subdue the sect of Kali worshippers, guerilla fighters who "kill for the love of killing". In the final shots of the movie, now in heaven, Gunga Din finally becomes Her Majesty's (Queen Victoria's) soldier. In essence, the movie, as well as others set in "Hollywood Kipling India" (e.g., *Wee Willie Winkie*, *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* and *The Charge of the Light Brigade*) applauds every aspect of the British virtue. Apart from qualities described earlier by Thorp, *Gunga Din* (1939) demonstrates how fair-play and equality in military units are also virtues that differentiated the Anglo-American way of life and thinking from the barbarian (under the surface Nazi).

Even the first isolationist and pacifist organizations protested movies such as *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* (1935) and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1936) for glamorizing wars that

[50] This description was provided by the Knights of Columbus, international fraternal society of Roman Catholic men, but Thorp equates the two.

the British Empire led throughout the world. Their efforts were useless. Roosevelt had strengthened ties to the British government, and by the end of the 1930s it was less advisable to show American patriotism in conflict with the British interests. This is why movies set in America during 18th and 19th century (most prominently The Revolutionary War), and featuring the British couldn't treat the British as crudes or oppressors. As Zanuck said for the production of Ford's western *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939), set during the Revolutionary War (1777-1783), "wherever possible, keep British out of brutality and blame all on Indians and Tories." (Smyth 2006: 244) McBride even notices that the same director's, John Ford's, well-known anti-British bias "underwent a dramatic transformation in *The Long Voyage Home* (1940)[51], which includes the burial at sea of a British sailor with "Rule, Britannia" playing on the soundtrack, and in *How Green Was My Valley* (1941), which offers a prayer for the monarch (Queen Victoria) and the Welsh Singers' rendition of "God Save the Queen." (2011: 328)

10.4. Dr.-Enter-the-War[52]

A clear interventionist course in Hollywood's moviemaking was more visible after the pogroms in Germany (especially after the "Kristallnacht") reached its pinnacle. Furthermore, at the end of the 1930s, after the Nazis annexed Austria and part of Czechoslovakia called Sudetenland, the American public was beginning to grasp that the new warfare will be one unlike the First World War. This new war will be the "people's war" and not "Empires' war". Every citizen will be affected, as the images of the German warplanes bombarding civilians in the Spanish Civil War and U-boats operating in the Atlantic became the dominant news in many magazines, newspapers and newsreels interested in international politics. Catherine Jurca superbly attacked the common opinion that Americans weren't interested in world ordeals during the late 1930s. She notes that during the Munich crisis (September 1938), "Americans purchased more radio sets during the three weeks that the crisis was broadcast than in any previous three-week period…It was self-evident to critics that the world is so interesting and fascinating that people buy newspapers to read about it and photo magazines to visualize it." (2012: 213)

[51] For the purpose of capitalizing upon the reports of German submarines and advocating empathy for the British seamen who are "doing their bit for England to win the war", Ford and his collaborators updated the original Eugene O'Neill's stories from WWI to WWII.

[52] As a reference to Roosevelt's speech from 28th December 1943, on how Dr-New-Deal was replaced by Dr-Win-the-War.

Hollywood turned genuinely interventionist when they started portraying the Nazis or the Nazi-look-a-likes as villains. Hitler's speech on the occasion of 6th anniversary of coming to power, on 30th January 1939: "And the announcement of American film companies of their intention to produce anti-Nazi – i.e., anti- German – films, will only lead to our German producers creating anti-Semitic films in the future," (Urwand 2013: 204) proves that Hollywood was prepared to attack the Nazi political system. This Hitler's first recorded observation of Hollywood's anti-Nazi intention corresponded to the actual state.

The PCA was merciless in its demands that Hollywood should not identify any wrongdoers with real countries and leaders, at least not great powers, Germany surely being amongst them. As Steven J. Ross stresses:

> "as late as January 1939, PCA censors attempted to halt production of Warner Bros.' *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, the nation's first explicitly anti-Nazi film, explaining that to "represent Hitler only as a screaming madman and a bloodthirsty persecutor, and nothing else, is manifestly unfair, considering his phenomenal public career, his unchallenged political and social achievements, and his position as head of the most important continental European power…" (2011: 37)

"Unfair" was something the anti-Nazi oriented part of Hollywood had to change into "fair". Additionally, Nazi regime's "political and social achievements" that the PCA censors were defending, needed to be contested. The task of anti-Nazi movies will prove to be, as Klaus Mann describes, "to reveal and to dramatize the real atrocity of the Nazis, the misery and boredom of daily life in the Third Reich, the martyrdom and stupidity of the German masses, the alarming scope and thoroughness of Nazi organization." (2003: 175) Consequently, many Hollywood productions will show the Nazis breaking homes and dividing families. Moreover, some moviemakers will observe and focus on the impression that the Nazi followers were rejecting religion and replacing it with paganism.

The Warner Brothers, with the help of numerous staunch anti-Nazi movie players, were first to make a laud statement on the issue. *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (even more sensational original title *Storm over America*) is a quasi- documentary dramatization of a real-life FBI investigation of a ring of pro-Nazi agents[53] and as conventional historical studies of Hollywood filmmaking agree, the first truly and explicitly first-run anti-Nazi movie. The movie was released by the Warner Brothers on 6th May, 1939, before the Nazi invasion of Poland. It

[53] John Wexley's (screenwriter who was after WWII accused by HUAC, the House Un-American Activities Committee, for spreading communist propaganda before and during WWII) script is based on an FBI agent's published articles.

reflected the anti-Nazi ideology of the production cast. Many of them were members of the Anti-Nazi League. Some fled from Germany when the Nazis took over, like Ukrainian-born director Anatole Litvak, and some had Jewish or German origins, like actor Francis Lederer. Earlier, it was explained that movie stars built a certain screen persona that led the audience to be expecting always similar payoff. And Edward G. Robbinson was in this sense the perfect casting choice. His role as Edward Renard, FBI agent who will uncover Nazi spy actions and meticulously deal with them, was an extension of G-men (Government men) roles he played in the mid and late 1930s gangster movies (e.g., *Bullets or Ballots* in 1936). In his character analysis of the Nazi Party members, he is ruthless and belligerent. He calls them "amateurs", "insane" and "half-witted, hysterical crackpots". By the end of the movie, Renard extends his argument: "you see these Nazis operating here and you think of all those operating in Germany, and you can't help feeling that they're, well, absolutely insane." The movie seems to put forward the idea that there is no cure for the Nazis. They are terminally inflicted by a hate virus that needs to be stopped. The movie is a fight between American values and Nazi brutishness and bigotry. As such, Goebbels look-a-like over the radio proclaims, "from now on National Socialism in the United States must dress itself in the American flag. It must appear to be a defence of Americanism." These lines provide the most dreadful aspect of Nazi ideology: the possible replacement of true American virtues and degradation of American patriotism.

What makes *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939) even more powerful, from anti-Nazi propaganda point of view, is that it succeeded in portraying the American-German Bund more as a sinister foreign cell rather than just another culturally oriented ethnic club. Moreover, the movie went a step further and implied that "the German government was guilty for subversive actions on American soil." (Sager 2015: 90) Some plot aspects, like the Nazi takeovers, must have seemed more factual than what the public would usually expect. The movie even referred to some real-world events, like the Anschluss[54]. And to make the movie's message more urgent, the producers decided, as Doherty notices, "in a nod to the central role radio was playing in the breaking news from Europe," to shot the narrator at the beginning, "in blackened silhouette before a microphone, as if broadcasting an urgent news bulletin." (2013: 337)

[54] Nazi annexation of Austria in 1938; the first clear sign of the Nazi insatiable craving for territorial expansion.

Images from *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939)[55]

The movie shows sinister Nazi imagery as well: SS uniforms, flags with swastikas, armbands and banners, and authentic newsreel footage of regimented crowds (i.e., robotic soldiers that march to the tunes of Nazi chiefs). In the year that followed another movie, but this time produced by proverbially submissive MGM, attempted to make use of Nazi imagery and stupidity of their claims to advance the anti-Nazi and, at the end, interventionist message.

The Mortal Storm (1940) is a film based on the 1937 book (subtitled *A Novel of Dictatorship*[56]) that takes place in a small University town in Bavaria at the time when Hitler became chancellor (January 1933), and is centred around Hollywood's common man, James

[55] As a Hollywood advertisement said: "The Picture That Calls a Swastika a Swastika!"; first image shows staged newsreel footage that adds to the authenticity of the movie's message; second shows an American at a German-American Bund meeting who protests Nazi supremacy.
[56] British writer Phyllis Bottome wrote the novel during her stay in Germany. It was conceived as a wake-up call for Britons who didn't perceive the Nazi ideology menacing.

Stewart (Martin). MGM, unlike the Warners while producing *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), conceived *The Mortal Storm* (1940) as a big-budget and all-star production. A great number of bankable stars were set to perform (besides Stewart, Margaret Sullavan, Robert Young and Frank Morgan). Frank Borzage was the perfect choice for the director, as his experience with the German milieu and depiction of anxious and politically insecure times was immense. This movie will become known as the third part of Borzage's "German trilogy", each instalment pushing more and more the interventionist message.

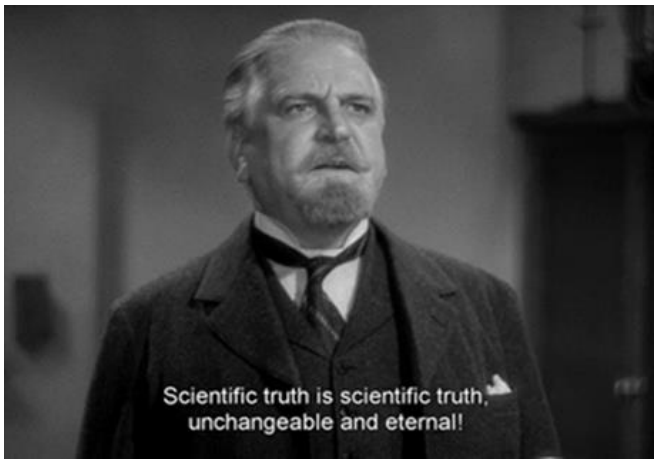


Image from *The Mortal Storm* (1940)[57]

The movie is a story of a university biology professor Viktor (Frank Morgan) and his family (Roth; a clear Jewish origin) who are persecuted because he refuses to teach that Aryan blood is superior to all other blood types. By professor Roth claiming that: "scientific truth is scientific truth, unchangeable and eternal," he continues the practice of Hollywood's biopic "grand man" heroes, most notably Louis Pasteur, of beating the evil forces that bend the science and scientific progress to consolidate their immoral (in this context Aryan) ideology. Additionally, the opening foreword, which provides a contemporary setting, but an eternal wrath, only enhances this great evil we are about to see. A voice from the heavens shouting: "Again, man is crying, I must kill my fellow man!" seems to invite us to dive into this evil. "Fellow man", as the movie unfolds, are Nazi-Germans' countrymen (professor Roth and his like), whom they are killing, feeling they are superior because of different origins. The fact that the Roth family has been farming on their land in Bavaria since 18th century, doesn't make any difference.

[57] This image shows Prof. Roth (Frank Morgan) attacking Aryan racial ideology. Prof. Roth will during the course of the movie defend the qualities of his people, i.e. Jews, and deliver didactic monologues which will ask of the Nazis to accept intellectual and cultural differences.

Image from *The Mortal Storm* (1940)[58]

In tune with Borzage's usual tone and MGM manner, the socially devastating implications are overpowered by undying love of a pair of idealists. The political, or better said interventionist, statement was a bit lessen by playing up the story of a romantic love and the couple's willingness to die for one another. Some, like Ben Urwand, would argue that it was also diminished by MGM's insistence on leaving out all the references to Jews, and replacing it with non-Aryan identity. Still, the political message wasn't lost in MGM's conformist approach. Just as Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* says of the film, it "falls definitely into the category of blistering anti-Nazi propaganda"[59]. Chris Yogerst puts forward a testament to movie's popularity and understanding of its anti-Nazi and interventionist intent: "a feature in the *Showman's Trade Review* detailed the film's popularity in an interview with the theatre's manager, Alden Adolph…Playing the National Anthem prior to the film, audiences would sing along, which created a sense of patriotism over tragedy. After *The Mortal Storm* ended, the audience would stand up and applaud." (2019: 11) The audience embraced the war cry. Seeing how professor Roth is sent to concentration camp and university turned into a military camp where the Nazis control everything, made the anti-Nazi narrative more captivating. Black and Koppes' assessment that it is "the industry's first essay on the Jewish question in Germany," (1987: 34) is accurate. Although the movie never mentions the United States or Jews by name, it categorically refutes Nazi racial ideology and makes Martin's anger at the end, when Freya's former fiancé shoots her down while the two of them were trying to escape Germany,

[58] This image shows Martin (James Stewart) and Freya (Margaret Sullavan) disapproving the Nazis saluting and their hypnotical singing performance. Martin also resists the Nazis' demand to conform, eventually being beaten in front of the Roth home.

[59] https://www.nytimes.com/1940/06/21/archives/the-screen-the-mortal-storm-a-deeply-tragic-antinazi-film-at-the.html (Last retrieved on 2nd September 2023)

toughened. As Roffman and Purdy masterfully observed, at the end "the camera moves into a closeup not of her tragic demise but of Martin's look of helpless rage." (1981: 211)

Just few months after MGM released *The Mortal Storm* (1940), Darryl Zanuck and 20th Century Fox finished a movie which celebrated the American way of life. *The Man I Married* (1940), originally titled *I Married a Nazi*, is a movie that wasn't afraid to show complete control as the foundation of a totalitarian regime like the Nazi one. It exposed the myth of non-existence of unemployment in the Nazi Germany (workers-prisoners that have to be guards), most notably through distrustful look at the accomplishment of big German industries (construction of cheap Volkswagen cars, for "only 400 American dollars", but which still haven't been delivered). Through outrages comments of Nazi followers, such as "only a traitor should want to hear what our newspapers don't tell us for our own good", the movie shows the real implications of a such totalitarian rule. It was not as popular as *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939) and *The Mortal Storm* (1940), but it was even more daring in its portrayal of Nazi immaturity and foolishness. The movie revolves around an American heroine (Joan Bennett), art critic, and her husband (Francis Lederer), who go to visit his father in Germany, after which she realizes the true nature of the Nazi way of life. Her father-in-law is a German Jew (the movie uses this word), ex-holder of a factory (the Nazis are banning him to work) who wants to start war because it is the only way to deal with "lunatics" who are discriminating him and his kind of people. The American heroine witnesses the virtual regression of her husband into a "mechanical doll" for the Nazis. Through the character of American correspondent in Berlin, a comic relief character, we learn of many Nazi "manias". As he says, "any nation that does not know to laugh is dangerous," and as Bosley Crowther writes of his role in the movie: "when the newspaperman, at the end, offers a fervid apostrophe to good old American hamburgers and ice cream sodas, you will mutter a heartfelt amen."[60] This film, unlike its predecessors on the same subjects, constructs its anti-Nazi sentiment around many insults and offensive descriptions of Hitler ("heil heel", "cheap demagogue", "little man with a moustache", "anti-Christ", "shickly"). *The Man I Married* (1940) also adds another aspect to Klaus Mann's description of a genuine anti-Nazi movie. Just like *The Mortal Storm* (1940), it is building an interventionist message by exposing the scope of their hatred and all the possible evils it can provoke. The world simply has to, as a character from a movie utters, "see their hatred." And in the end, the heroine converts from a naïve isolationist to fervent interventionist.

[60] https://www.nytimes.com/1940/08/03/archives/the-screen-the-man-i-married-a-drama-of-inside-germany-at-the.html (Last retrieved on 22nd August 2023)

Even a selfish and insolent mercenary can convert to an interventionist for the right cause. A *Yank in the R.A.F.* (1941) went further in making a case for military preparedness. It foreshadowed US intervention (in the opening of the movie Neutrality Acts are violated by Americans sending planes and pilots to fight in the Battle of England) and by all accounts the audience enjoyed it. The movie was produced by Darrly Zanuck, and what is very rare for any Hollywood production of the 1930s, he contributed to the script by writing under a pseudonym. This fact, alongside Zanuck's decision to pair the two most bankable stars at 20th Century Fox (Tyrone Power and Betty Grable), only confirm him being a supporter of the US entry into the WWII. The story is one familiar for aviation epic genre[61], a young man (Tim Baker, played by Power) without any real ideals, lacking discipline and teamwork, gains a perspective when seeing how precious things are freedom and liberty. Lady he is infatuated with, Carol Brown (Grable), convinces him to redirect his excitement from chasing women to helping those in need. Bennett accurately regards the movie as "a coming-of-age story" in which "the protagonist develops into an Anglophile and interventionist, in a story that implicitly associates his erstwhile Anglophobia and isolationism with immaturity." (2012: 78) Even Carol, a nightclub performer, who does her part by volunteering in the ambulance reserve in London, observes how her Tim will change from a man of "ideas", to man of ideals. Many contemporary sources highlighted that the British government and military forces consulted and provided the filmmakers with operative help by lending "thousands of feet of film showing the R.A.F. in action fighting against German planes."[62] Propaganda value of *A Yank in the R.A.F.* (1941) was enormous, and the critics of the time agreed (e.g., *Newsweek* said "supercharged with propaganda"). Among them, Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* wrote in September of 1941: "Never have Darryl F. Zanuck and Twentieth Century-Fox owed so much to so few as they do for the pulsing excitement contained in their new film,"[63] deliberately invoking Churchill's wartime speech.[64]

Although Walter Wanger didn't invoke Churchill's wartime speech, in his first next project after politically provocative *Blockade* (1938) he still provided a subtle, but audacious exposition of the dangers the USA could beset if the Battle of Britain is lost, i.e., if the Luftwaffe defeats the Royal Air Force. *Foreign Correspondent* (1940) was producer Wanger's second

[61] In a similar fashion Hollywood made *The Down Patrol* (1938) and *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939)
[62] https://catalog.afi.com/Catalog/moviedetails/27081 (Last retrieved on 22nd September 2023)
[63] https://www.nytimes.com/1941/09/27/archives/a-yank-in-the-raf-is-a-lively-bit-of-romance-and-adventure-at-the.html (Last retrieved on 29th August 2023)
[64] On 20th August 1940 Churchill spoke that, "never in the field of human conflict, was so much owed, by so many, to so few," referring to the audacity of the British airmen against evil Nazi forces.

attempt at adapting the anti-Nazi story of *Personal History*. And as Breen told Hays, it bore "little resemblance to the story we were concerned about two years ago," especially since the Spanish Civil War was dropped as the background to the story and the Jewish problem completely omitted. (Black, Koppes 1987: 31) This time it was to be Anglo-American co-production, and second Hollywood production for British-born Alfred Hitchcock. Earlier, William Dieterle was assigned to direct, following his success with *The Life of Emile Zola* (1937). This was a clear sign that the movie was meant to be politically charged, as Dieterle was known around Hollywood as an ardent anti-fascist filmmaker. With Hitchcock replacing him, and making so many changes to the original anti-Nazi novel on which the movie was loosely based, there was a concern, from anti-Nazi point of view, that the final work won't bear an interventionist message. *Foreign Correspondent* (1940) is a story done in the manner of a spy thriller. A newspaper reporter, a genuine isolationist who is indifferent to foreign affairs, will stumble upon a Nazi scheme: recent kidnapping of some British diplomats. The setting was changed from Spain and Berlin, as it could have been had the production stuck to the original novel, to London and Amsterdam. At the beginning, carefree correspondent John Jones (Joel McCrea) is exclusively interested in chasing his girlfriend and trying to earn some extra money, even if it means interviewing Hitler. After this initial ignorant attitude, intensified by farcical look at the enemies, who aren't even named as Nazis, Jones foregoes a change. As the story unfolds, Jones is more and more convinced that the Germans who are supposedly working to restore order and peace are schemers. Next thing he knows, the Germans attack Poland, and Britain declares war. On his way back to London, when saved by an American ship after the aircraft he was on got shelled by the Germans, John Jones decides to share his perspective over a live radio broadcast. Desperate, he cries out, accompanied by "The Star-Spangled Banner":

> "Hello, America. I have been watching a part of the world being blown to pieces. A part of the world as nice as Vermont and Ohio, Virginia, California and Illinois, lies ripped up and bleeding like a steer in a slaughter house…You can hear the bombs falling now; falling on the streets, cafes, and homes…It feels like all the lights are out everywhere except America. Keep those lights burning there. Cover them with steel, ring them with guns. Build a canopy of battleships and bombing planes around them. Hello, America. Hang onto your lights. They're the only lights left in the world." (*Foreign Correspondent*, 1940)

This speech at the end of the movie is crucial. Under still existing isolationist pressure, Jones couldn't invite America to simply enter the WWII. But he could appeal to common sense of every peace-loving American. And it is done in a real Hollywood fashion: the romantic couple is united in a final embrace; we listen to air raid sirens; and John uses his opportunity to

defy the Neutrality Acts by tricking the captain of the rescue ship as he decides to send a report to his newspaper. This report is direct, gloomy (lights fading, darkness emerging), panic-stricken, yet not capitulating. Jones appeals to every single American as he compares the beauty of the British landscape and way of life to different "nice parts" of America. Even Joseph Goebbels acknowledged its potential as a wake-up call in a report: "A masterpiece of propaganda," he wrote, "a first-class production which no doubt will make a certain impression upon the broad masses of people in enemy countries."[65]

Images from *Foreign Correspondent* (1940)[66]

Apart from inspiring ending, there is one more evidence to the claim that *Foreign Correspondent* (1940) should be seen as an interventionist creed, as Todd Bennett notices,

[65] https://www.criterion.com/current/posts/3063-foreign-correspondent-the-windmills-of-war (Last retrieved on 22nd August 2023)

[66] The first image shows the biggest threat is the one coming from the sky (bombardment); the second shows American reporter John Jones (Joel McCrea) giving a speech over a radio from London, urging American public to arm themselves.

"fellows who are trying to prevent war in the movie, are the Nazis who start them." (2002: 87) Film in this sense equates anti-war activism with Nazi subversion.

And how could Hitler be ridiculed and attacked, and what is reasoning behind intervening on the behalf of humanity and civilization? Chaplin attacked him on the behalf of humanity, and Lang civilization. Chaplin wants to humiliate Hitler, Lang to make an animal out of him.

The Great Dictator (1940) is a definite indictment of Hitler, Nazi rule and anti-Semitism in a satirical manner.[67] The mythical kingdom setting (Tomainia), false names (Hynkel, Garbitsch, Napaloni) and insignia (swastikas and roman salute are distorted) couldn't obscure the true purpose of the movie and its creator, Charlie Chaplin. Chaplin started the project even before *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* went into production, as early as October of 1938, making him one of the first artists active in explicit anti-fascist and anti-Nazi propaganda. Chaplin conceived it to be his first sound movie, which made the project even more appealing to general public. His solitary tramp figure was about to be substituted with a genuine spokesman. In his previous movies, Chaplin almost always dealt with his problems by escaping. This time, Nazism was too great menace to be dismissed or escaped from. Chaplin had to be careful in creating his new politically charged picture, for it was difficult to predict the reaction of the Hollywood censors. He was slowed down by various pressure groups who saw the idea of undermining Nazism from within unreasonably risky. But Chaplin was so determined to carry on with the project, "for Hitler must be laughed at." (Black, Koppes 1987: 31)

Chaplin had already experienced distributional issues with the German market. His previous masterwork *Modern Times* (1936) was outright banned in Nazi Germany, because it "inclined toward bolshevism." (Ross 2011: 35-6) Chaplin's leftist and socialist proclivities were evident especially after the WWII, as the right-win press and FBI attacked him severely at the press conferences for his new movie *Monsieur Verdoux* (1947) and made him flee the USA under the charges of being a communist and quisling. In the context of interventionist study, movie's opening foreword and closing speech are of utmost importance. The opening intertitle sets the film's tone, as well as tragedy of the present world conditions: "This is a story of a period between Two World Wars – an interim in which Insanity cut loose, Liberty took a nose dive, and Humanity was kicked around somewhat...". Chaplin's protagonist is a Jewish

[67] Three Stooges with two short satirical comedies, *You Nazty Spy!* (1940) and *I'll Never Heil Again* (1941), were also contributing to attack on the Nazi personnel and their way of thinking.

barber, who will replace the dictator Adenoid Hynkel at the end of the movie, as a speaker on the stage (stage deliberately being all the world), is the personification of this "Liberty" and "Humanity" lost, and Hynkel of "Insanity". Virtues of liberty and humanity are lost because of a megalomaniac at the top, dictator Hynkel known as "the Phooey, a cynical, hysterical and self-interested man whose life is entirely removed from that of his people, whom he sees only as objects to be manipulated." (Alpers 2003: 88)

Image from *The Great Dictator* (1940)[68]

Most of *The Great Dictator* (1940) plays out as a satire. It mocks Hitler's vocal hysterics, egotism and arrogance. Nevertheless, Chaplin's ultimate political statement is outlined at the very end of the movie, in a soliloquy, which he delivered in a manner of an epistle. The Jewish barber, mistaken for Hynkel due to their similar appearance (Chaplin effortlessly utilizes his tramp's signature moustache which bear strong resemblance to Hitler's toothbrush moustache style), ends on the stage where he has to deliver a speech to the people of Tomainia (i.e., German people). He ends his speech with a plea:

> Dictators free themselves but they enslave the people! Now let us fight to fulfil that promise! Let us fight to free the world - to do away with national barriers - to do away with greed, with hate and intolerance. Let us fight for a world of reason, a world where science and progress will lead to all men's happiness. Soldiers! in the name of democracy, let us all unite! (*The Great Dictator*, 1940)

Eric Flom argues that "the speech is perhaps most reflective of Chaplin's idealism and humanist philosophy," with its cry for universal brotherhood and living by each other's happiness. (1997: 143) But, more significantly, it calls for a fight, one for liberty. Just like in *Sergeant York* (1941; see later analysis), Chaplin quotes the Bible and goes to a great extent to

[68] The Jewish barber, mistaken for dictator Adenoid Hynkel (both played by Chaplin), gets the chance at the end of the movie to call the audience to "fight for a world of reason" by breaking the fourth wall.

circumvent religious pacifism by making fight for human rights inevitable. Ironically, although the final speech was Chaplin's artistically dubious choice, one which for obvious reasons made film narrative less logical and more uneven, it actually made his message to stand out, and to breathe a life of its own. After the movie's unequivocal box office success, Chaplin was invited to reenact the final speech on several radio broadcasts. The parts of the speech were featured on Christmas cards. Chaplin even performed it twice for Roosevelt as a part of the president's inauguration celebrations (e.g., the Third Inaugural Gala on 19th January 1941). The final speech's intent was, as Flom suggests, "to show the people of the world that Hitler and his Nazi forces were a terrible menace to individual freedom and global peace, and that the Fascist dogma was a direct threat to humankind everywhere." (1997: 135) In this sense, the German and Italian government's reputation was hurt, as Chaplin calls their leaders "brutes". In *The Great Dictator* (1940), the solution to the problem of dictatorship is one both internal and external. The Jewish barber asks all soldiers, among them Germans, to unite in the name of democracy. The barber dreams of a revolutionary dethroning, but knows that world has to unite to bring the dream forward.

Man Hunt (1941) was produced by Darryl Zanuck and directed by Fritz Lang. Among all interventionist movies, it is the one that came closest to a "hate" picture. Breen was serious when he called it "hate the Hun film," by pointing out that "the film characterized all Nazis as brutal and inhuman people." (Black, Koppes 1987: 35) The movie shows Lang's typical dark imagery that dominated his pictures, dating back to his German movies (especially his last German movie *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*, where the dark imagery served as an allegory to show the criminal doctrines of the Nazi regime) and continuing throughout his American pictures (*Fury*, *You Only Live Once* and during the WWII *Hangmen Also Die!*[69]). Fascist and sadistic behaviour of the townspeople from *Fury* (1936) who form a mob on the grounds of a gossip, is in *Man Hunt* (1941) communicated via German military officers' brutality. The movie conveys more graphic violence and horror than the previous movies that exposed the Nazi officials. The sinister Gestapo officers and Adolf Hitler himself are, by the words of the movie's hero, "returning back to the primitive values…to the barbarism of decapitation". The hero is a British captain Thorndike (Walter Pidgeon), who at the beginning of the movie, in July 1939

[69] A movie (produced in 1943) for which three distinguished artists, all refugees from Nazi Germany (Fritz Lang, Bertol Brecht and Hanns Eisler), successfully collaborated. This project is a prime example of the influence the German artists and cultural figures had on Hollywood filmmaking, and consequently on American political culture.

and somewhere in Germany, just for sake of a game, gets in a shooting distance to liquidate Hitler.

Image from *Man Hunt* (1941)[70]

As the title suggests, and the superimposed special hunting gun in the opening credits, Hitler is reduced to animal-like figure. Thorndike describes Hitler to a senior Gestapo officer, played by a regular Nazi character George Sanders (*Confessions of a Nazi Spy* and *Foreign Correspondent*) who portrays the archetypical world-conquering Nazi ("Today, Europe. Tomorrow, the world"), as "a man who wants to play God", rendering Hitler as a madman. During the course of the movie, in the realm of a political conversion story and similarly to *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), Thorndike learns and experiences on his own skin the dangers of Gestapo propaganda. First, in Germany Thorndike is captured and tortured by the Gestapo. Later, back in London, Gestapo agents are cunningly infiltrating the British posts and hunting down Thorndike. After initial indifference, Thorndike undergoes a change of heart. While recovering in a hospital, transfixed by memories of his darling killed by the Nazis and followed by newsreel footage declaring "Britain blockaded" and "London bombed", Thorndike realizes he must act. At the movie's closure, we see Walter Pidgeon becoming a member of R.A.F. and landing with a parachute on German territory to hunt down Hitler. This movie has a less of morale than its predecessors on this subject. Thorndike is a patriot, but a one lead primarily by vengeance. Still, the audience could easily be swayed by the psychological state the hero is possessed by at the end. And, by the unknown, newsreel-like narrator prediction at the moment

[70] British Captain Thorndike (Walter Pidgeon), in a hunting game at the beginning of the movie, has Hitler in his gun sight. An alarming image for Hollywood censors, but powerful for interventionist propaganda.

of Thorndike's jump from R.A.F. airplane, that there is an intelligent and capable warrior, one who "clearly knows his purpose", on his way to hunt down the most dangerous animal of them all, i.e., Hitler.

Movies like *Man Hunt* (1941) and *The Great Dictator* (1940) show Nazi thugs, especially Gestapo and high-ranking officers, for what they are: savages. These movies suggest that the Third Reich operates as a gangster state. These morally corrupt individuals are, just like the gangsters in America, condemned to loveless life. However, unlike the gangsters in the 1930s America cinema, nothing can turn Nazi thugs into "normal" people, thus, as Alpers notices, during the 1930s "no studio made a movie about a Nazi softened into normalcy." (2003: 133)

In this inter-war period, war movies that would explore WWI were almost non-existent. Even the impact of the WWI on the veterans was a subject rarely addressed in the movies. Two noteworthy movies from 1939 did include war veterans in their plots, both to boost the feeling of insecurity. In *Idiot's Delight* (1939), WWI veteran (Clark Gable) becomes a vaudeville entertainer just to make ends meet. In *The Roaring Twenties* (1939), WWI veteran (James Cagney) turns to bootlegging because nothing else is available. The two associated the First World War only with misery. As Richard Slotkin writes of the Hollywood films made about World War I, which were low in demand, up to the late 1930s, "for them realism meant the representation of war as cruel, dirty, and ultimately futile." (1998: 314) During the 1930s, many Americans undoubtedly viewed the American involvement in WWI as a mistake. However, two movies set during the WWI that definitely turned the isolationist tide were produced by the Warner Brothers: *The Fighting 69th* (1940) and *Sergeant York* (1941). They broke from the view that wars are senseless. Instead, they emphasized the notion of patriotic willingness to do one's duty for the country's well-being. Moreover, they stressed a view of combat that highlighted bravery, camaraderie, and even redemptive glory. Just like *The Man I Married* (naïve art critic) and *Foreign Correspondent* (carefree newspaper man), these two are more effective because they are stories of political conversion. The story of *The Fighting 69th* (1940) revolves around James Cagney's character (Jerry Plunkett), a loudmouth soldier who, apart from not showing respect for the authority, acts as a hoodlum. The strength of this movie is twofold. First, by casting Cagney in a similar fashion as for his earlier gangster movies and making him change his ways to prove his worth for the battalion and transforming him into a team player on behalf of the war effort, the public could be more convinced of the ennobling aspect of standing up for something in a war against the Germans. Second, the brawl scene at

the beginning of the movie of two battalions that were on opposite sides during the American Civil War plays for the purpose of reestablishing national unity. By asserting that "those men on both sides were Americans", the commanding officer wants to build a true integral American spirit. As he adds, the Fighting 69th is "the average, yet epitome of national courage", because it represents "all the states and territories". It is not just the commanding officer, but a priest figure, Father Duffy (Pat O'Brien), who, even more in a Production Code – like manner, makes his sacred duty to eradicate the ethic animosities existing in the outfit (many members are Irish and Jewish immigrants, now living in New York). Near the end of the movie, Father Duffy "returns a favour to a Jewish recruit who changed his name to join the unit by filling in for a Jewish rabbi, reading a Hebrew prayer for a dying Jewish soldier." (Doherty 2013: 358) The strength of his character comes from Pat O'Brien's already established signature quality: sincerity (his Father Jerry from *Angels with Dirty Faces* being the best proof; a movie which teamed O'Brien and Cagney in a similar fashion as *The Fighting 69th*).

A year later, Warners produced even a more daring conversion story, based on a diary of a Medal of Honour recipient. *Sergeant York* (1941), the 1941's best grosser[71], another Warners' tribute to war effort, is a glorification of a real-life WWI hero Alvin C. York. It premiered on 2nd July, 1941, so still in time to teach a lesson in historical events and "break the news" why it is necessary to fight. York, played by American regular everyman, laconic Gary Cooper, is a farmer and elite marksman, but a conscientious objector who during the course of the film must learn the importance of defending what America stands for: liberty. The movie spends more time on the moral issue of whether fighting and killing can be justified than showing the actual battle scenes. York's initial attitude is shaped by the Bible, "I ain't a-goin' to war. War's killin', and the book's agin' killin! So war is agin' the book!", is changed by another book, given to him by Major Buxton, *The History of the United States*. This book is "full of great men" who were fighting enemies of liberty. It is this combination of the two, devout Christianity and newly acquired American exceptionalism that makes York ideal American war hero, or as Smedley points out, "the film concludes that warfare is in the tradition of American agrarianism, Daniel Boone[72] and Christianity." (2011: 201) In this sense, the moral

[71] 1941's top ten grossers were *Sergeant* York (Gary Cooper--S6,000,000), Charlie Chaplin's The *Great Dictator* ($2,750,000), followed by *Honky Tonk* (Clark Gable and Lana Turner), A *Yank in the* ~ (Tyrone Power and Betty Grable), *Philadelphia Story* (Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn, and James Stewart), D/re *Bomber* (Errol Flynn and Fred MacMurray), Abbott and Costello in *Caught in the Draft* (they made four films that year), Jack Benny as *Charley's Aunt, Men of Boys Town* (Spencer Tracy and Mickey Rooney) and Mickey Rooney's *Andy Hardy's Private Secretary* (documented by *Variety*, first-run figures).

[72] A frontier hero reference to American hero from 18th century; an explorer and a soldier who fought savages and defended American settlers. The movie suggests that Alvin York is the direct disciple of frontiersmen philosophy.

dilemma York is weighted by, the biblical command "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's", is completely sorted out. And even the film score, as Birdwell notices, "subtly blends patriotic music and Christian folk hymns to persuade its audience to practice their Christian principles and follow York into battle. (1999: 128) By the film's finale, York gains moral necessity to fight fascism. A look at the box office confirms that *Sergeant York* (1941) appealed to American audience. The producer, Jerry Lasky, publicly validated that they were "making it timely and patriotic to a degree," and the reviewers were aware of it. (Birdwell 1999: 124) Reviewer for *Newsweek* summed it perfectly: "It is an engrossing and humorous record of the American way of life in a backwoods community, as well as a timely drama of the inner struggle of a deeply religious man who weighs his horror of killing against what he feels is the greater necessity to stop all killing." (Birdwell 1999: 125) Of all the interventionist movies, *Sergeant York* (1941) is the one closest to the war morale "one must kill to prevent killing." Just like *A Yank in the R.A.F.* (1941) was used to boost the nation's morale, Black and Koppes account for "Hollywood and Washington exploiting Sergeant York for all it was worth...For young men who got the message that they, like York, should go off and fight for democracy, the army was ready with an eight-page pamphlet on the hero and a hard sell of recruitment material." (1987: 38-9)

10.5. Hollywood gains political impetus

Sergeant York (1941) was the last blow to the isolationist America. Just like Franklin D. Roosevelt couldn't ask every "American to remain neutral in thought as well,"[73] nor could political isolationists. Nonetheless, a formal investigation was launched by the Senate because of "war propaganda in motion pictures" in September 1941. The very fact that political opponents of American entry in the WWII found it necessary to rebuke the film industry and tempting to try to put movies under federal censorship, proves that part of the Hollywood, and not just anybody but major studio executives, was making neutrality unbearable. The committee was led by a well-known isolationist senator, Gerald Nye. He was prone to believe that the Jewish filmmakers were more susceptible to hate foreigners and American way of life. Nye and other isolationist opponents of Hollywood's political commitment would have it that they, sometimes clearly pointing out Jews, have "replaced patriotism with hatred of Hitler". The committee "investigated" forty-eight films (twenty-five American features, thirteen foreign

[73] Franklin D. Roosevelt speaking on 15th September 1939, while signing the declaration of neutrality.

features, mostly British, and ten RKO *March of Time* newsreels[74]). (Ceplair, Englund 1983: 160) The British films were accused of being powerful propaganda pieces that wanted to push America in the war at any cost. Some British actors, directors and producers living and working in Hollywood, were pinpointed as particularly treacherous (e.g., Ronald Colman, Cary Grant and Alfred Hitchcock).[75] The committee called them "British Army of Occupation", and singled out Hungarian-British producer with a temporary residence in the US, Alexander Korda, as instrumental in British efforts to lure the American public in a war against Hitler. Korda held a large share of the United Artists, one of the "Big Eight" studios, which gave him an opportunity to produce and distribute movies which would advocate the British cause and American help (e.g., *Lion Has Wings*, 1940, and *That Hamilton Woman*, 1941). Korda was on friendly terms with the British ruling politicians, especially Winston Churchill. This fact and Bennett's documentation that "Churchill had asked Korda to move to promote US intervention in the war by making films that would not emanate from official sources," made the British pro-war propaganda and objective to persuade American isolationists to change sides even more apparent. (2002: 91) On the other hand, American features being scrutinized included many of the titles earlier discussed (*Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, *The Man I Married, Man Hunt, The Great Dictator, Sergeant York*). Particularly offensive to Nye was *Sergeant York* (1941) because the film was "praised by President Roosevelt who invited the real Alvin York to the White House." (Yogerst 2019: 14) The American film industry was ready to stand up against these accusations. At the trials, they were represented by three movie giants: Nicholas Schenck, Harry Warner and Darryl Zanuck. All three of them, with the help of their attorney, none other than the 1940 Republican presidential candidate and Roosevelt's opponent Wendell Willkie (attesting to the seriousness of the issue), defended the industry by holding the position that Hollywood's anti-Nazi pictures were not propaganda but accurate portrayals. The only thing they aimed for in those controversial projects was presenting the world as it is. They were only interested in facts, and they gave the audience what they already wanted, the box office being proof. Nonetheless, Schenck, Warner (Harry) and Zanuck, didn't hesitate to refer to the subject they are being

[74] These were especially damaging to the reputation of the Nazi regime, sarcastically announcing that "Hitler's peace offensive is on".

[75] Even German film artists were assisting in the British effort. For example, Conrad Veidt, actor who fled Germany in 1933 for the sake of his Jewish wife and settled in the UK, decided to move to Hollywood in 1941. He surely aimed to prepare the American audience, with his fellow anti-Nazi supporters, for the upcoming WWII, by working on movies that would hurt the Nazi regime. He will accept typecasting him as a Nazi villain and will be instrumental in many upcoming anti-Nazi projects. Two movies will stand out: spy thriller *Nazi Agent* (1942), which principal photography will start in November 1941 and more absorbing and potent *Casablanca* (1942), which will dominate the box office in 1942 and 1943, but which was based on an anti-Nazi play *Everybody Comes to Rick's* written before the American entry into WWII.

accused of as “Nazi or Hitler menace”, thus clearly highlighting the world’s gravest danger. As the hearings proceeded, “the movie executives made isolationists look foolish when they couldn’t pinpoint which movies and what exactly was objectionable.” (Bennett 2002: 99-100)

The press coverage was unwelcoming for the investigators. Many major newspapers openly opposed the investigators’ agenda. They attacked the isolationist committee for their nonsense, calling the hearings “an inquisition directed against the freedom of speech and a joke.” (Moser 2001: 744) Public opinion was also unwelcoming. Even Hays came to Hollywood’s rescue by claiming that “92.7 percent of all the feature-length films released since the outbreak of World War II were completely unrelated to the war,” while those that dramatized war or military conflict he called merely, “pure entertainment.” (Moser 2001: 741)

In the end, the Senate’s investigation was unsuccessful. The freedom of speech won and interventionist sensibilities got its new affirmation. Just as in the movies discussed earlier, isolationism was once again associated with weakness and misjudgement. The American public was being prepared for war even before Pearl Harbour, through “the campaign to minimize differences within America,” by emphasizing equality and unity. (Bodnar 2003: 61) And, the attack on the Pearl Harbour was just around the corner. On December 7th 1941, the Japanese attacked the neutral USA, making Roosevelt’s foreign policy decision-making a lot easier. This date marks another shift in the Hollywood output. After the attack on Pearl Harbour, the Hollywood film industry had a new moral obligation: to boost the war morale and to recruit Americans. Hollywood would work more closely with the government and many renowned filmmakers would be directly involved in producing pictures for the U.S. Department of War (John Ford, George Stevens, William Wyler, John Huston and Frank Capra, his *Why We Fight* series of documentaries being the prime example of propaganda in favour of the U.S. campaign against the Nazis). This time interventionist feelings were definitely patriotic ones as well.

11. Conclusion

The movies produced in Hollywood during the period in question (from 1933 to 1941) definitely reflected American values that were shaped by an unprecedented economic hardship, crisis in the individualist ethic and changes of the USA's political climate. The Hollywood community's interest intersected with that of the new president Franklin Delano Roosevelt, his administration and the New Deal politics. The first part of the paper listed and clarified the social values that were indispensable to the Depression-stricken audience. As such, Roosevelt's rhetoric, which included the defence of democratic ideals, communal solidarity and strong denunciation of dictatorship, influenced the filmmakers' way of thinking. The New Deal optimism emerged as a force of its own. The New Deal cinema preached that the opposite should cooperate. That is why Hollywood filmmakers downplayed the role of ethnicity and class identity in forming acceptable social values. Allegiance to the right cause and sense of national unity became more important than financially succeeding or reaching prominence at any cost. The social values promoted through the 1930s Hollywood movies were more conformist, and less anarchic and hedonistic than the ones fostered during the Silent and pre-Code period in Hollywood. All things considered, for Hollywood, Americanism, as the sum of every social value Americans were proud of, meant more than anything transcending social class. The American audience could interpret that in America they are all Americans. Nevertheless, from today's point of view many racial, ethnic and religious minorities couldn't feel the same, as they were left out.

During the 1930s, the Hollywood film industry as a whole, created worlds, from adventure movies, family films and literary adaptations to social dramas and westerns, where middle-class rectitude and longing for an uncorrupted rural way of life was the path towards personal fulfilment. Hollywood adventure movies of the 1930s replaced rugged individualists with compassionate freedom-fighters (like Robin Hood, Captain Blood and Beau Geste) who were reliant on their fellowmen to defeat morally corrupted forces. Family-friendly films, literary adaptations and even serious social-issue films (e.g., *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Boys Town* and *Black Legion*), celebrated family as the counterforce to social chaos (usually in the form of mob violence). Allegiance to family and duty were promoted because of the strong Catholic cultural influence which stemmed from the very forceful Hays Code. The mostly Jewish studio executives' efforts to assimilate and political conformism they displayed in studio politics were also reasons why Catholic values were integral part of the Hollywood studios' output. The sense of community, common decency and humanitarian work was propagated by many priest

figures. However, what dominated even more than Catholic morality in the 1930s Hollywood movies were populist values. The populist hero, the "little man", like Mr. Deeds, Mr. Smith and John Doe from Frank Capra world, maintained responsibility to the community, law, authority and country. The "little man" was honest, hard-working and a true democrat. He proved that the New Deal morality, which attacked city "slickers", gangsters, pseudo-intellectuals and greedy businessmen, was entering the public domain. The Great Depression and the new 1930s production trends brought demystification of Hollywood movie stars, and celebration of plain-folk sensibilities. Hollywood stars who played upright citizens and compassionate spouses were acting as role models to the mostly middle-class audience. Men leads were honourable (e.g., Muni, Gable, Flynn) and women devout (e.g., Stanwyck, Shearer, Arthur). The child stars who topped the box office, most notably Shirley Temple, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, showed that the key human values are tolerance, prudence and thoughtfulness.

As the work in this paper showed, the Hollywood's politically-engaged part of the community encouraged making movies with leftist sympathies. This meant that the movie projects they participated in would defend the democratic national institutions, and, even more, the Founding Fathers' creed: democracy as the guarantee of freedom, liberty and quality of life. Hollywood wasn't subversive, at best sometimes reactionary. The political agenda was shared trough political movements, like the Popular Front and Anti-Nazi League. The members and sponsors of these organizations, movie moguls and producers (Harry and Jack Warner, Darryl Zanuck, Carl Laemmle, Irving Thalberg, Walter Wanger), American film players (Charlie Chaplin, Edward G. Robinson, Donald Ogden Stewart) and German and Jewish emigrants (most famous Germans being directors Fritz Lang, William Dieterle, Billy Wilder), wanted, more than others, to use the film as a sociological medium. Hence, more and more movies attacked authoritarian forces and fostered humanitarian spirit in times of ever-growing international threat.

This paper has stressed the role the Hollywood movies played in demonstrating the American audience the ennobling aspects of patriotic loyalties and the magnitude of possible foreign threats. Unlike the Silent and pre-Code Hollywood, during Roosevelt's presidency more movies engaged with patriotic feelings. The movies of the 1930s confirmed that patriotism was more than just mere appreciation of sense of place and belonging. Patriotism had not just a communal significance, but an international as well. American Patriotism was linked to the Hollywood industry's interventionist tendencies in many ways. Anti-fascism proved to be the focal point of the Hollywood's political activism. Hollywood during the 1930s restrained from

producing straightforward anti-war pictures. Anti-war activism and pacifist sentiments among the movie community were diminishing as the Second World War was approaching. It is safe to conclude that isolationist topic wasn't appealing to American audience. Many peace advocates among the filmmakers began comprehending why it was necessary and righteous to interfere in world affairs, and those who didn't got silenced. Films after the premiere of *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939) that portrayed the First World War or dramatized the Nazis' atrocities, emphasized the need for patriotic willingness to defend American values. In this sense, political conversion stories were the most obliging to the idea of America entering the war. They respectfully claimed that an individual, no matter how uninterested (*The Fighting 69th*, *Man Hunt, A Yank in the R.A.F, Foreign Correspondent*) or uncompromising (*Sergeant York*), will come to his senses and realize that he must do one's duty and subordinate his own interest to those of the group. Apart from them, many espionage melodramas, historical biopics and adventure movies displayed sympathy for the British in order to advance the British cause among the Americans: to stop the Nazi invaders from conquering the remaining free parts of the world. Many real-life and grand historical figures (e.g., Abraham Lincoln, Emile Zola, Benito Juarez, Nathan Rothschild, Louis Pasteur, Paul Ehrlich, Horatio Nelson, Queen Elizabeth I, Alvin C. York) were exploited to educate the American audience of the dangers the Nazi menace could bring. These filmmakers were supporting the notion of intervening on the part of the humanity. Moreover, they were claiming intervening should be in tune with America's national interests, because fascist-like forces, like foreign cells similar to the German Bund portrayed in *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), homespun dictators as in *Meet John Doe* (1941) or nativist vigilantes as in *Black Legion* (1937), were a real danger to the preservation of the virtuous rule of the majority, i.e., democracy.

Hollywood proved liberal democracy is superior to fascism. It also demonstrated that democratic propaganda was unlike totalitarian. It appealed to reason and aspired to accuracy. As the unsuccessful Senate investigation of motion picture propaganda from the 1941 showed, the opposition to the Hollywood's interventionist initiative was feeble shortly before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour. It would be an exaggeration to say that the Hollywood industry as a whole organized a clever and treacherous interventionist setup to persuade the American audience to arm themselves. Many filmmakers and pivotal Hollywood bureaucrats, like Louis B. Mayer and the head of the censor office Joseph Breen, were ambivalent or uninterested in world ordeals, or far from firm believers in Roosevelt's foreign policies. Nonetheless, by looking at the box office and critics' favourable reviews, it is evident that the

American public wasn't bothered with supposedly inflaming and warmongering stories. On the whole, the most politically-engaged filmmakers and actors should be lauded for their courageous efforts to address the issue of Nazi menace, as to inquire is sometimes all that is needed.

12. Summary

This paper examines the social values the most popular and successful Hollywood movies of the "New Deal" cinema were promoting, from Roosevelt's ascendancy to presidential post (March 1933), leading up to American involvement in the WWII (December 1941). Roosevelt's New Deal values, socially conservative ideology encouraged by the most successful Hollywood producers and new populist ethics, all influenced the new Hollywood production trends. Furthermore, the work acknowledges the significance of the shift in the star marketability. In this sense, it makes the claim that the Hollywood of the 1930s abounds with films that promote patriotism as essential social value and a part of larger set of values all joint under the term "Americanism". In these times, the morally proper conduct, under the influence of the Hays Code moralism, is linked to Americanism in many ways. Hollywood teaches that every American's duty in the 1930s will be to defend the democratic ideals. The work covers the issues of distinct 1930s genres and trends ("little man", British-empire movies, westerns, "grand man" biopics, child-stars flicks and family films). By analysing the social values those movies communicate, this paper conveys the importance of anti-fascist and interventionist cause among the Hollywood community. The paper will clarify strategies used to identify the Nazi menace, necessary to circumvent the Hollywood studio system's conformist approach to moviemaking. To verify this point of view, at the end the paper will show propaganda hearings at the beginning of the 1940s as a clash between traditionalist, isolationist America and a modern, New Deal, interventionist America in which the latter will prevail.

Key words: Hollywood, the New Deal, the Hays Code, social values, patriotism, interventionism, anti-fascism, anti-Nazi propaganda

Sažetak

Ovaj rad proučava društvene vrijednosti koje su promicali najpopularniji i najuspješniji hollywoodski filmovi za vrijeme „New Deal" pokreta, počevši s Rooseveltovim stupanjem na

predsjedničku poziciju (ožujak 1933.g.) pa do ulaska SAD-a u Drugi svjetski rat (prosinac 1941.g.). Produkcijski trendovi u tadašnjem Hollywoodu bili su oblikovani utjecajem društvenih vrijednosti Rooseveltove „New Deal“ ideologije, zatim društveno konzervativnije ideologije koju su promicali najuspješniji hollywoodski producenti i naposljetku novog populističkog etičkog kodeksa. Nadalje, ovaj rad ukazuje na značaj koji je imala promjena u utrživosti pojedinih hollywoodskih zvijezda. U tom kontekstu, obrađuje i ističe se u kolikoj su mjeri hollywoodski filmovi promicali domoljublje kao esencijalnu društvenu vrijednost i kao dio značajno sveobuhvatnijeg skupa vrijednosti poznatijeg kao „Amerikanstvo“. Tokom 1930ih, moralno ispravno ponašanje, pod budnim okom moralizma kojeg je propisivao Haysov kodeks, je na mnogo načina bilo ključno za njegovanje „Amerikanstva“. Hollywood poučava da je dužnost svakog Amerikanca tokom 1930ih braniti ideale demokracije. Ovaj rad istražuje razne filmske žanrove i trendove jedinstvene za period koji se proučava („mali čovjek“, filmovi o Britanskom imperiju, vesterni, biografije o „velikanima“, komercijalni „dječji“ filmovi i obiteljski filmovi). Kroz analizu društvenih vrijednosti koje ti filmovi ističu, rad apostrofira značaj antifašističke i intervencionističke namjere među hollywoodskom zajednicom. Rad će objasniti stategije koje su redatelji i producenti koristili kako bi ilustrirali razmjere nacističke opasnosti. Kako bi se ova perspektiva potkrijepila, ovaj rad će predočiti saslušanja koja su se odvijala početkom 1940ih o propagandnom djelovanju Hollywooda, na kojima su se sukobile dvije strane: tradicionalna i izolacionistička Amerika i moderna, „New Deal“ i intervencionistička Amerika; od kojih će pobjedu odnijeti ona druga.

Ključne riječi: Hollywood, New Deal, Haysov kodeks, društvene vrijednosti, patriotizam, intervencionizam, antifašizam, antinacistička propaganda

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14. Movie index (in a chronological order)

42nd Street (1933)

Footlight Parade (1933)

Gold Diggers of 1933 (1933)

Little Women (1933)

Heroes for Sale (1933)

Wild Boys of the Road (1933)

Gabriel over the White House (1933)

Duck Soup (1933)

The President Vanishes (1934)

Little Man, What Now? (1934)

Manhattan Melodrama (1934)

The House of Rothschild (1934)

Captain Blood (1935)

Mutiny on the Bounty (1935)

A Tale of Two Cities (1935)

The Littlest Rebel (1935)

The Story of Louis Pasteur (1936)

The Charge of the Light Brigade (1936)

Fury (1936)

Mr. Deeds Goes to Town (1936)

San Francisco (1936)

Dodsworth (1936)

The Prisoner of Shark Island (1936)

Modern Times (1936)

Dead End (1937)

A Star is Born (1937)

The Life of Emile Zola (1937)

Black Legion (1937)

The Road Back (1937)

Parnell (1937)

Stella Dallas (1937)

Wee Willie Winkie (1937)

Captains Courageous (1937)

The Spanish Earth (1937)

The Good Earth (1937)

The Andy Hardy series (1937-1941)

You Can't Take It with You (1938)

The Adventures of Robin Hood (1938)

Angels with Dirty Faces (1938)

Blockade (1938)

Boys Town (1938)

Three Comrades (1938)

Marie Antoinette (1938)

Young Mr. Lincoln (1939)

Only Angels Have Wings (1939)

The Wizard of Oz (1939)

The Roaring Twenties (1939)

Union Pacific (1939)

Ninotchka (1939)

Dodge City (1939)

Jesse James (1939)

Juarez (1939)

Beau Geste (1939)

Gunga Din (1939)

Idiot's Delight (1939)

Confessions of a Nazi Spy (1939)

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939)

Gone with the Wind (1939)

Stagecoach (1939)

The Grapes of Wrath (1940)

The Shop Around the Corner (1940)

The Mortal Storm (1940)

Abe Lincoln in Illinois (1940)

Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet (1940)

The Sea Hawk (1940)

The Long Voyage Home (1940)

Foreign Correspondent (1940)

The Great Dictator (1940)

The Man I Married (1940)

The Fighting 69th (1940)

Citizen Kane (1941)

How Green Was My Valley (1941)

That Hamilton Woman (1941)

Meet John Doe (1941)

A Yank in the R.A.F. (1941)

Man Hunt (1941)

Sergeant York (1941)