

'PRELUDE TO WAR' SHOWN TO PUBLIC

53-Minute Army 'Orientation'
Film Presented at Strand in
Pre-release Engagement

EXPLAINS 'WHY WE FIGHT'

250 Prints Available to the
Nation on May 27—Preface
to Series on View by Troops

"Prelude to War," a fifty-three minute Army "orientation" film which has already been shown to millions of troops as the first in a series of motion pictures intended to explain "why we fight," was given its first public showing at the Strand Theatre yesterday, where it went on the bill in a pre-release engagement before being distributed to commercial theatres throughout the nation. On May 27, some 250 prints will be made available, free of charge, by the Office of War Information and the War Activities Committee of the motion picture industry.

Made by the special service division of the Army service forces, under the supervision of Lieut. Col. Frank Capra and with the cooperation of the Army Signal Corps, "Prelude to War" has been in circulation in Army camps, here and overseas, for several months. Succeeding films in the series, already completed and now being shown to troops, are "The Nazis Strike," "Divide and Conquer" and "The Battle of Britain."

Conflict of Free and Enslaved

Designed as a preface to the series, "Prelude to War" is a generalized review of some events which preceded the present conflict and of the broad issues for which we fight. Made up from American newsreels, captured Axis films, some staged scenes and a goodly assortment of animated maps, it hammers the single thesis that this is a war between free States and those which would enslave the world. It demonstrates in vivid pictures how the Germans, the Italians and the Japanese were regimented by their leaders with the aim of conquering the world and explains the motivation as "just plain old-fashioned militarism."

Against the horrifying picture of regimentation in the Axis lands it shows how the American people remained free, pursuing the good life, feeling secure in isolation and indifferent to storm signals overseas. Then it illustrates how the campaigns of conquest began in Manchuria in 1931 with the invasion by Japan, and sketches the further adventures of the aggressors through the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. There it leaves the story to be taken up in the next film, "The Nazis Strike."

Huston Gives Commentary

Technically, this picture has been made with a great deal of inflammatory effectiveness. Walter Huston, who speaks the commentary, does so with heavy solemnity and anger in his voice. And Colonel Capra and his associates have used some strong scenes to rouse the blood. Particularly effective is one long sequence of Axis soldiers marching, marching endlessly, to insistent martial music and the heavy beat of drums.

As an introduction to a series of presumably more explicit films, "Prelude to War" has reportedly been well received by American troops. It was obviously made on the assumption that the successive films would be seen. As a consequence, its effectiveness with the public, as a single release, is questionable. Its generalizations are vague and it leans heavily on patriotic symbolism to convey a sense of America. It leaves many obvious "why" questions completely unanswered. And it doesn't give as compelling a concept of the realities of this war as did the Office of War Information's "The World at War," which was released eight months ago. It is decidedly late arriving. But it may still have an inspirational effect—especially upon whatever people have been living, up till now, uninformed.

B. C.

Other amusement news Pages 17, 22