

Blue's reply to Adorn criticism Jim Blue notes

Feb 64

We have told the world that we love truth. When we speak to the world, we speak, we say, in the words of truth. We are proud of our ability to face truth squarely and openly without fear of unpleasantness. A man who takes stock of himself simply and honestly with a greater love for truth than for the immediate pleasures of self-dillusion is well on his way to becoming a better man. The whole dynamic structure of our Democratic Society provides for--even demands--this kind of stock-taking in the blazing light of the public forum. It strengthens the fiber of the nation. Our faith in the unshakable foundation of our land makes possible all discussion, all debate, all criticism in the search for truth. Of personal, regional, national or international truth, we have no fear. There are no iron curtains.

We have said that the totalitarian societies of the world are afraid to speak the truth. It would shake their foundations. It would weaken their fiber. They must bend truth, we say, they must slant it, transform it, even reject it. What they speak to the world is what they want the world to believe. We say that at best they speak "half-truths", that they may say true things but that they have omitted (and glowing) all else which would have tarnished that glow. This omission, we believe, condemns not only what they say, but the structure of their society.

It follows then, that information coming from Totalitarian sources should in no way resemble information coming from Democratic sources. Surprisingly enough, in regard to films this is not always so. In my three years in France and two and a half years in North Africa I had a chance to see informational films from all sources. Curiously, in their structure and philosophy they all seemed to come from the same source. The smiling Russian woman her back against a wide blue sky, and the happy American housewife flipping pancakes on a decorator color stove seemed to have come from the same type-writer. The editing, the narration, the music all propounded a theme and seemed to ordain what was to be thought. These films followed the same propaganda techniques as these of the Hitler era. In short they were totalitarian. They sought to dominate the mind. They were monolithic. They possessed none of the multi-dimensional complexities that give to a film the ring of truth. In a sense, these films sold their ideologies in the same manner that Television publicity sells soap or cigarettes.

Blue on prop films

like
I am of the opinion that American Democracy should not be sold like a hair spray. It should not and it need not. The spectator of a film coming from America must feel confident that there are no "sins" of omission. He must feel that there is no domination or imposition upon his liberty of thought but that he is being helped to see. In this way films that speak of life in America reflect Democratic ideals even in their structure. With this in mind, let us turn now to the considerations which were constantly with me during the editing of the film about the March on Washington.

del. 1/1/50
The world's image of the race problem in America resembles what we know of Apartheid in South Africa. Segregation, exploitation, immense poverty, enforced illiteracy, whites and blacks at sword points: a situation which is at best overwhelmingly paternalistic. This image is, unfortunately, not without foundation in fact. There is, however, a question of degree. An interpretation of the American racial situation by people in foreign lands has very often been determined by their own experiences with colonialism. They have lent the dimensions and intensity of their own problems to ours. Their suspicion of their one-time conquerors has by analogy encouraged a mistrust of the intentions of our government. For these people, the dimensions of the problem and the hope for its solution needs to be refocused.

said
We need to reveal to the world what is meant when we say that the Negro's economic level is only half of that of the White man. We need to give a better understanding of the Negro's real educational level and of his religious and political freedom. We need to gain confidence in the will of our people and our government to overcome the age-old problem of racism. *President named*

current film world
We can not do this with a film that attempts to say overtly how good things are going. Articles in newspapers every week seem to contradict this attempt. The result is that we seem to be covering up, glossing over, actually denying the necessity of change. To ~~an~~ African, for instance, this would be interpreted as another indication of paternalism. Only those who feel themselves superior, speak of the progress of a minority. What ~~was~~ needed was a film which did not hide nor gloss over the situation, which by its frankness, gained the confidence of the spectator and-- *film as me*
and honesty helped that confidence once acquired-- permitted him to discover for himself the degree to which his image of the situation was out of focus. The March on Washington provided ideal material for this kind of film. It also permitted us to make several implicate points about the quality of our Democracy and the ~~paternal~~ will of Americans to lead the effort *world*
determined

inside ally
in the establishment of true equality among all races and creeds. This ~~is~~ The ~~is~~ role of leader in ^{the} drive for Freedom has been a role we have always assumed, but it is a role that the communists have worked hard to appropriate. One wonders what soviet citizen might have thought of the March on Washington. It is interesting to note that at the last minute Russian television declined to broadcast it. The ~~reason~~ is obvious. *reason*

In spite of all that Russian commentators might have said to deform it, it was too implicitly pro-American.

Let us see now how the film "THE MARCH" works to ~~win~~ gain the confidence of the foreign spectator and lead him to discover for himself many of those things needed in order for him to refocus his views about the American race problem, Americans and America.

Over scenes of both black and white Americans preparing for and coming to the march from all over the country, a simple, quiet narration tells of the Negro's ~~problem~~ ^{problem}, situates the roots of the problem in one-time slavery and says that Americans of both races were now going to exercise their constitutional right to demonstrate for redress of grievances. The narration alludes to incidents of hatred and violence ~~which are~~ (common knowledge around the world) and which the civil rights marcher hopes to overcome ~~through~~ legitimate and peace-
in a

loving manner. This information, imparted in a few quietly stated phrases over a period of about four minutes not only situates

the action but declares our recognition of the problems, ~~and~~. Since the film is identified as a governmental film, it implies that we are recognizing our responsibilities toward those problems. This establishes a bond between the spectator and the film. There is no "Sin of omission". There is no "Paternalism" to be sniffed out. (suggested?)

The film then moves along ^{for 25 more minutes} without any commentary whatsoever. It moves along on a growing note of anticipation, joy and hope for a better ~~future~~ understanding between races and religions for all of mankind. As buses are leaving a preacher in a church service gives a prayer that man might understand his fellowman and that America might fulfill its high ideals. The night before the march whites and blacks gather to sing and to reaffirm their dedication to Christian ideals, to love those who speak against them. ~~When~~ the day begins. Black and white Americans arrive by train, by a multitude of buses. There is joy, singing, it looks like an orderly but mammoth picnic. There is the huge gathering at the Washington monument, the ~~march~~ down Constitution Avenue walk

and along the reflecting pool, and finally the enormous crowd at the Lincoln memorial. There I selected to show ~~the~~ two things ~~which~~ which most characterized the event: the great dignity and womanly gentleness of Marian Anderson singing "He's Got the Whole World in his Hands" and Martin Luther King who restates the grievances ~~stated~~ ^{mentioned} earlier in the narration and declares his great faith that all problems can and will be solved peacefully and to the ~~greater~~ ^{greater} glory of our nation. The ceremony ends with singing as the participants stroll back to their buses and go home. A final line of narration states simply that many said that the March indicated a new awakening of the American conscience, others called it a national disgrace. The narrator dispels the illusion that anything was solved. More violence was to come, ^{with the March} more hatred (which it did and the world read about it in the papers) but, he points out, this was a day of hope.

and selection

Despite the condensation/necessary to fit the event into a workable length, everything ^{was} as it was on August 28. Just as people around the world had seen it on television and read it in the papers. With one important exception, the portable movie cameras enable us to establish a more intimate contact with the people in ~~the crowd~~ and ~~xxx~~ permit us to DISCOVER things about them, permit us to reassess ~~xxx~~ our views about the race situation without anything being underscored or shoved down the ~~spectator's~~ ^{own} throat. ~~xxx~~ Throughout the film, in fact, many positive things are being discovered without any heavy handed ~~shove~~ from an omnipotent narrator. The economic level of the average negro, their freedom of religious expression, the great amount of inter-racial cooperation and acceptance, ^{the great} ~~something~~ of ~~his~~ educational opportunities already available ^{as the Negro} witnessed not only by ~~his~~ economic level but by his

Portable cameras

most prominent members who speak and by the successful organization of such a march. The ~~effects~~ ^{of the march goes far beyond these} aspects. It demonstrates that Americans' legitimate and peaceful ways to deal with their problems, that they prefer to do so peacefully with a complete faith in their government and that their government respects their right to protest. And by issuing this film, that government not only permits but condones their action. All of these things can be DISCOVERED by the foreign spectator and compared to the facts of his own existence. They also gave him a deeper insight into the ~~xxx~~ nature of the American race problem ~~and~~ into American Democracy itself. I might also mention something about the police. ~~While there is mention of police brutality in King's speech we also get another picture:~~ Of the three or four policemen who can be seen in the film two of ~~which~~ are negro, and they all are very much at

Further than this

to show black policemen

ease, smiling ~~smiling~~ and relaxed. This cannot fail to make its mark. ^{which I have mentioned} These things are all implicit in the film. I am persuaded that ~~all~~ ^{any} efforts to make these points ~~explicitly~~ in an explicit manner would be to destroy the confidence that the spectator has ~~given~~ ⁱⁿ the film and arouse his suspicions that he is being sold a bill of goods.

by narration of whites

There are two aspects of the March which I consciously avoided. The visit of its leaders to members of government and ~~xxx~~ plea for a strong civil rights bill.

the
The first I abandoned for two reasons: 1. Because of the little time allowed cameras to film the ~~f~~ visits, the footage was inferior and of such a nature to make the visits look superficial and ridiculous. It also was of such a nature as to make impossible a smooth incorporation into the film.

left out

2.) It would tend to lend support to feelings in some parts of the world that the march was government instigated. In countries where demonstrations are organized by totalitarian regimes, the democratic ~~xxx~~ significance of the march risked being lost.

in the film

The second aspect of the march, the plea for a civil rights bill, was avoided for the following reason:

The march's supreme purpose was ~~to~~ not only express grievances but also to ~~bring to the attention of~~ demonstrate the devotion of a great number of Americans to the realization of the nations ideals and the ideals of freedom throughout the world. To link the film to the civil rights bill would have been to put the film at the mercy of the fate of the bill and its inevitable ~~ensuing~~ storm of controversy. The film now has not only universality but longevity.

longevity
no
45000

The final emotional effect ^{of this film} is one of hope ^{and relief} that there is an ~~intimation of~~ possible fraternity among men and that America is working actively to fulfill that hope, that the spirit and temper of the American Democratic experience is not only still intact but vibrant and splendid.

no fundamental
in view of
Thyso

In presenting this film to the world we present a film that no totalitarian society could have made. It is a film in which we face our problems with zeal and with unshakeable faith in our ideals. It is a Democratic and American film.

OPINION
MAKERS