

# PM

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Speaking of

## MOVIES

By JOHN T. McMANUS

Tomorrow at the World Theater a German film that was banned by the Nazis just ten years ago, as one of their first official acts of suppression of free opinion in Germany, will have its American premiere. The movie is *The Last Will of Dr. Mabuse*, and its creator was Fritz Lang, the Austrian director who made *Metropolis* and *M* in the great age of German film making under the post-war Weimar Republic. Lang has since become an important Hollywood director, starting his American career with the notable film on mob violence, *Fury*, in 1936, and clicking most recently with *Manhunt*.

### Against Hitler

The reason the Nazis banned *The Last Will of Dr. Mabuse* was that it was a political preachment against Hitler "socialism," by a man whose films were appreciated by the Germans as true interpretations of the social trends of post-war Germany.

Lang's intention in the film, the third of his *Dr Mabuse* allegories, was, in his own words, "to expose the masked Nazi theory of the necessity to deliberately destroy everything which is precious to a people so that they would lose all faith in the institutions and ideals of the State. Then, when everything collapsed, they would try to find help in the 'new order.'" The film's villain employed the processes of Hitler terrorism, and criminals spoke Nazi slogans.

The allegory was so close to the truth that the Nazis put it out of circulation within a month after they came to power. But for a film creator of Lang's persuasiveness they had other plans. He was summoned to the Ministry of Propaganda for a personal interview with Dr. Goebbels. The Fuehrer, Goebbels told Lang, knew his work very well, and had decided that Lang was the man for the job of making the epic film of National Socialism. The hero was to be the Nazi Brownshirt. The villain was Communism. The theme: the Nazi New Order.

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## 2 Against Hitler

Lang, who is now in New York in connection with plans for the release of his film on the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, *Hangmen Also Die*, recalls that interview with Goebbels as the first moment in which he became fully aware of the stark reality of Nazism. Like most other German progressives, he had recognized the movement as a mobilization of corrupt forces, organized by big industrialists and popularized with free beer and demagoguery. But like the others, he thought it would not last, that it could be won against by free political processes.

But in Goebbels' office, hearing the little man outline the Fuehrer's plans, it came to Lang with a rush that the free institutions were gone; that the Nazi nihilism had effectively stamped out all avenues of attack against it. He realized that he had to flee Germany, right then, that very day.

As Goebbels talked he watched the clock tick around toward three. The banks would close. He could get over the border that night but he would need money for tickets, lodging. Then he realized that getting to the bank was hopeless. At home he had 3000 marks. That would suffice; the rest could go—home, belongings, fortune—none of them seemed to matter. The only thing that mattered was getting out of that office.

### Flees to Paris

Goebbels finally dismissed him and, that night, it was in March, 1933, Lang packed two trunks, dug out his passport, bought tickets for Paris, and departed. Near the border, he tucked his bundle of marks into a dining car folder and left them there until all customs inquiries were behind and the free land of France was comfortably under his train wheels. The Nazis eventually appropriated all he left behind.

Lang is now a U. S. citizen. He came on to Hollywood after a year in France, where he built his 3000 marks into a new film career. His current production, *Hangmen Also Die*, which will be shown here next month, probably at the Capitol, will try to impress upon American audiences the corruptness and actual sadism of principle of Nazism, an interpretation of the Nazis which Lang insists America must recognize before it can fully understand the enemy.

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