

cratic force in Cuba" because he always appeals to "public opinion on the TV and also in person." *Comment*: By this criterion, Adolf Hitler was the most democratic force in Germany.

Mills writes breathlessly about the economic performance of the Castro regime. He turns molehills into mountains and makes the incredible statement that the Cuban revolution is the first in the world "which began right away with an increased production." This is false and is refuted by all unbiased and competent observers.

He seems completely insensitive to the fact that Castro and his Communists have destroyed freedom of the press, due process of law, the right to vote and the other basic liberties of Western civilization. He voices no objection to the wholesale executions, the denunciations and the pervasive secret police system; he dismisses the suffocation of the Cuban press with the fantastic falsehood that that press was "just a part of Batista's ruling gang"; and he assures his readers that the leading figures in Castro's regime are not Communists.

Now let us turn from the little lies to the big ones. Mills or his *alter ego* claims that the United States supported Batista (whom he characterized in professional fashion as a "butcher . . . a sick barbarian, a cruel savage . . . bloody bastard") right up to the end. This falsifies history. The United States put pressure on Batista to get out in 1957-58 and embargoed arms shipments to his regime in March 1958, thereby pulling the rug out from under him and ensuring his downfall. At the time, according to Mills' own admission, Castro had only 300 men under his command and hence could hardly have been the ratified voice of the Cuban people.

Then, Dr. Mills claims that United States investment is the cause of Latin American poverty and cites Cuba and Venezuela. He neglects to state that because of "oil imperialism," per capita income in Venezuela in 1956 was \$750, or two and a half times the Latin American average. Corrupt and rotten as the Batista regime was, it is worth remembering that Cuban real national income rose

38 per cent during 1953-57. Nor was this gain absorbed by Mills' greedy capitalists. During 1946-54, wages and salaries moved from 56 per cent to 65 per cent of Cuban national income.

Mills may be right in one important respect. If the Communist regime in Cuba survives, it may bring Cuba into an era of rapid, dynamic expansion. What Cuba has lacked is vigorous, accelerated capital creation. The USSR can afford to provide the

capital and technicians for this, since there are only seven million Cubans and since the stakes are all Latin America. Moreover, Communist techniques of organization, propaganda and coercion make it possible to speed up real investment and "mobilize" idle labor. The fallacy of the innocent supporters of *Fidelismo* is to imagine that only Communism can create capital resources swiftly and that nations must choose between freedom and factories.

Movies

Wayne at the Alamo

JOAN DIDION



IN THE course of my duties as one of two utility infielders on the staff of a sixty-cent magazine, I am frequently dispatched to see movies. (Despite its sedentary nature, this is referred to around the office as "doing legwork," and is much respected.) Ever since the day when my companion infielder, an old Barnard girl, admitted that she liked Rossellini, the *nouvelle vague*, Jules Dassin, Peter Sellers, Ingmar Bergman, and movies made on the West Side with local talent and some leftover sixteen-millimeter film, I have been able to wallow in my own favorites: the Movies that are Better Than Ever, the twenty-four-carat Coast Product.

Despite a distinct preference for movies released by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, mostly because their Broadway projection room features murals showing great scenes from great MGM movies (it is an inspiring thing to sit there of a rainy Wednesday afternoon and contemplate the old days, when Dalton Trumbo was writing movies like *A Guy Named Joe* and *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*), I committed myself instead not long ago into the care of United Artists to see John Wayne's *The Alamo*. (I use the possessive advisedly: Mr. Wayne not only produced it, directed it, and played Davy Crockett in it, but cast both his teenage son, Patrick, and his toddling daughter, Alissa, in featured roles.)

There seemed to be no real rea-

son other than John Wayne's presence, why I should like *The Alamo*. This was no Western, no thing of perfect symmetry, no classic tale played out beneath the blazing still sun of American myth, reaching its *agon* in the dust of a never-never Main Street. This was a message picture, as surely as *Gentlemen's Agreement*, *Pinky*, *Home of the Brave*. Although I do not like to admit it, perhaps I simply approved the message, loved John Wayne for writing in the *Hollywood Reporter* that he wanted to "show this living generation of Americans what their country really stands for," adored him for saying that he got the money (it took twelve million dollars to get this particular message on the screen) "from great men like Clinton W. Murchison and O. J. and I. J. McCullough."

Because if you do like *The Alamo*, and I did, you like it in the face of obstacles some would think steep. (So many thought those obstacles not only steep but insurmountable, in fact, that it became necessary for The Daughters of the Republic of Texas to announce that "it is entirely out of line for the New York papers to be so sarcastic.") When I saw *The Alamo*, it was running three hours and thirty-six minutes (Obstacle #1), which made seeing it only slightly less strenuous than defending it had been. John Wayne, however, later acceded to popular demand and agreed to cut the prints a little. As far as I was concerned, he could have

Books of Interest

Let Us Now Praise Famous Men, by James Agee and Evans Walker (Houghton, \$6.50). Re-issue of the 1941 classic in which a harrowingly honest man's search for the personal meaning of charity is brilliantly disguised as a documentary account of three Alabama families during the Depression.

The Blowing Up of the Parthenon, by Salvador de Madariaga (Praeger, \$2.95). A brisk little book by a man who is of the novel opinion that wars, hot or cold, are for winning.

Pomp and Circumstance, by Noel Coward (Doubleday, \$4.50). An instant antibiotic against taking-oneself-too-seriously; a little novel that has the texture and flavor of the froth on the top of a frozen daiquiri.

The Earp Brothers of Tombstone, by Frank Waters (Clarkson N. Potter, \$5.00). A dissent on Wyatt and the boys, in which it is revealed that there was dirty work afoot down at the O.K. Corral.

Sermons and Soda-Water, by John O'Hara (Random House, \$5.95). Three short novels in search of an editor—but proof, nonetheless, that nobody but O'Hara really knows the road from Gibbville to "21."

edited out almost every sequence featuring Laurence Harvey (Obstacle #2); my first thought was that he could have edited out every sequence featuring Laurence Harvey, but since Harvey, through some misadventure, was playing Travis, this solution to the length-problem might have proved perhaps too extreme, perhaps a little impractical.

All right, now. Overlook the length. Overlook Harvey. Overlook Frankie Avalon, who finds it necessary now and then to give out with a little modified rock. Overlook the homely,

rough-hewn, synthetic good humor put forth by Chill Wills and the rest of the Kentucky mountain boys. Overlook the birthday party given for the Alamo's favorite toddler (Alissa Wayne) on the eve of the siege. (This should be easy enough to overlook since it has, I understand, been cut.) Overlook the fact that she is heard to lisp, after the shooting's over, "Where's Daddy, Mummy?" Overlook the first thirty or forty minutes, during which time Travis (Harvey) pouts around, Sam Houston (Richard Boone) strides around to no effect, and Jim Bowie (Richard Widmark) tools around like a Los Angeles teenager deprived of his wheels.

Wait. About forty-five minutes into *The Alamo*, a man appears on that immense Todd-AO horizon. He smiles. He moves his shoulders a little. He says "Les-go" or something like it; who cares what he says? He goes riding through the tall grass down to San Antonio, right off the top of the screen, and you are, if you are like me, lost, lost forever. It is John Wayne. It might be Clark Gable, appearing in a white linen suit amid the flaming ruin of Atlanta to carry Scarlett home to Tara; it might be the purr of an American plane—

always distinguishable from Axis planes, which had engines that whined—coming in overhead just as the rations run out in a World War II movie. From then on, the ball game's over.

At least it was for me. I wept as Wayne told his Mexican *inamorata* How A Man's Gotta Live. I wept as he explained why Republic Is A Beautiful Word. I wept throughout the siege of the mission; there was no use in my companion's trying to amuse me by pointing out that it had just come home to Richard Widmark, although the problem had been under discussion on screen for some three hours, that "WE NEED MORE MEN!" I was inconsolable by the time the battle was done, and Wayne lay on the cold cold ground, bleeding as no one has bled since Janet Leigh in *Psycho*. The last white woman walked out of the Alamo then. She had soot on her face, and she was carrying her child, and she held her head high as she walked past Santa Anna into the sunset. So conspicuous was my sniffing by then that you could scarcely hear the snickers from my neighbors, a couple of young men from *Esquire*, both of whom resembled Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.

They don't make 'em like Duke on the New Frontiers.

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