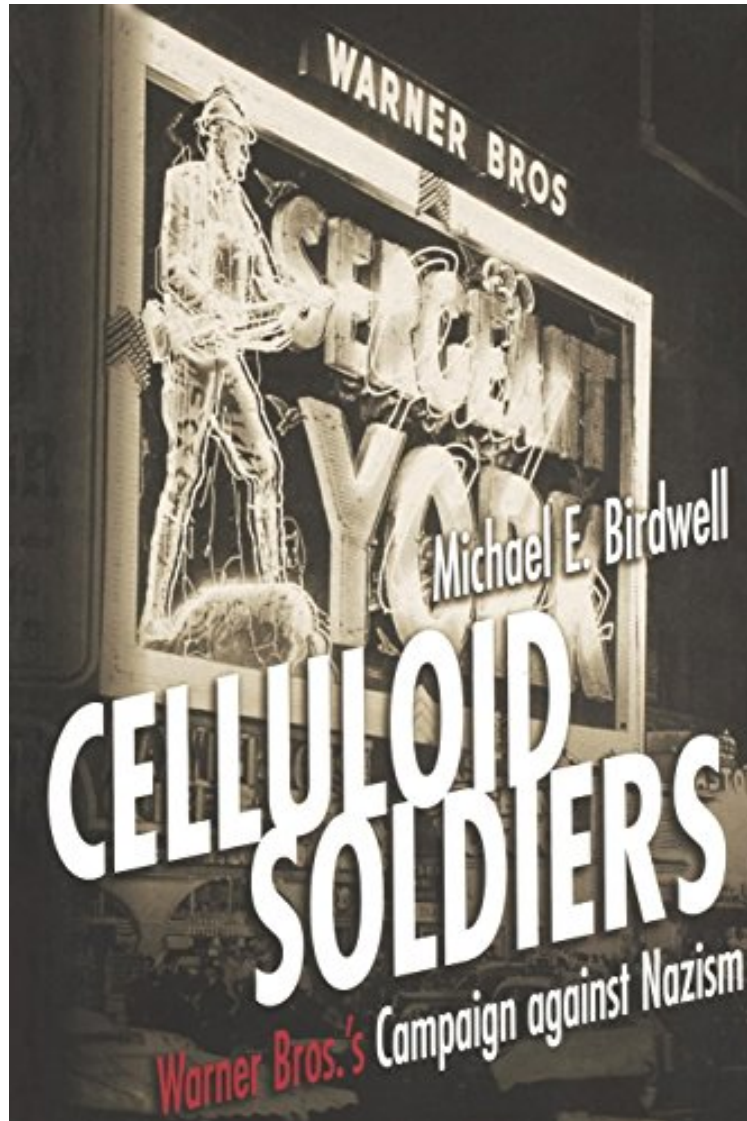


(Free read ebook) Celluloid Soldiers: The Warner Bros. Campaign Against Nazism

## Celluloid Soldiers: The Warner Bros. Campaign Against Nazism

*Michael E. Birdwell*

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**Michael E. Birdwell : Celluloid Soldiers: The Warner Bros. Campaign Against Nazism** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Celluloid Soldiers: The Warner Bros. Campaign Against Nazism:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Worth the read!By CustomerLearned thing about Sgt. York that I never knew. Well worth the time to read if interested in truthful Tennessee history.10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. WARNER BROTHERS MOVIES PAVE THE WAY FOR USA WWII ENTRANCEBy David Roger AllenDr. Michael E. Birdwell of the University Of Tennessee's Center For The Study Of War And Society has authored

an interesting, detailed, and scholarly yet readable book about intentional efforts by Hollywood's Warner Brothers Movie Studios to encourage USA entrance into World War II during a pre-war period characterized by massive social and political opposition to war entry by still famous groups such as the Charles Lindbergh led America First group, and also by more than 300 other anti-war entry groups identified by the Roosevelt administration's pro-war FBI in 1938. Dr. Birdwell explains that the Warner Brothers' effort to encourage hostility to the German government through use of Hollywood movies began in the early thirties, and was particularly the result of the fervor of Harry Warner, the "head" Warner brother, a devout religious Jew who tried without success to purchase Germany's largest movie studio called UFA, producer of famous 1920's German silent classics including THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI and METROPOLIS. As Dr. Birdwell tells the tale, Harry Warner was just about to close the UFA purchase deal when the Nazis came to power in 1933, and stopped German business dealings with Jewish owned and/or dominated companies like Warner Brothers. Harry Warner became very angry at this rebuff, and began his own personal war with Germany which, Dr. Birdwell argues, resulted importantly in the USA decision to join and support that war, which went on to cost more than half a million American lives. Anti-war politicians of the 1930's put many roadblocks in Mr. Warner's way, including especially the Neutrality Act of the mid-1930's, which forbade negative characterization of America's then trading partners, in which ranks Germany numbered prominently. This did not deter Mr. Warner whose efforts began with a 1936 Warner Brothers cartoon, and then with a live action movie titled BLACK LEGION about one of the many anti-Black, anti-Jewish political groups active in the 1930's. All seven of the major Hollywood studios of the 1930's were owned and run by American Jews (the Disney studio was not, but was tiny compared to the others, and could not be called a true peer of the "majors" in 1930's Hollywood). The Harry Warner anti-German campaign included movies such as DR. EHRLICH'S MAGIC BULLET (about the Jewish research scientist who found a cure for venereal disease) and others which celebrated accomplishment by Jews. It also included a series of short subjects, shown in movie houses along with cartoons, etc. to supplement feature films, titled the Old Glory series, which identified Jews prominent in American history, including Chaim Solomon who helped finance the American Revolutionary War, and the Levi family who bought Thomas Jefferson's Monticello mansion, lived in it for almost 100 years, then set up the foundation which still operates and makes tours of Jefferson's home available to the public. Feature movies of various types were also produced to support the pro-war entry cause, including SERGEANT YORK (about a conscientious objector during WWI who changed his mind and became a winner of the Congressional Medal Of Honor) starring Gary Cooper (who won an Academy Award for his role) and CASABLANCA (about an expatriate American in Morocco who distains politics, but suddenly is converted to the anti-German cause in the last moments of the film) starring Humphrey Bogart (the film won an Academy Award for "best picture," and interestingly includes Conrad Veidt starring as the German villain, "Major Strasse," 20 years after Veidt starred in Germany's most famous movie of the 1920's, THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI, a UFA production). Movies which celebrated England and patriotism on England's behalf (such as ROBIN HOOD and THE SEA HAWK, both starring Warner Brothers Australian born movie star, Errol Flynn) were produced to overcome American antipathy, then widely prevalent, for helping England maintain her Empire. After USA entrance into the war, the efforts of Warner Brothers (and other studios) to support USA war activity continued, and included the participation of a Warner Brothers contract player (in a movie titled THIS IS THE ARMY) who later became the President of the United States, Ronald Reagan. Dr. Birdwell's book is worth reading. It is an important addition to the literature of books published over the decades, and longer, about the place of propaganda in propagating and encouraging participation in wars, even when those wars are unpopular, as WWII was in the eyes of many Americans before USA entrance into WWII.

9 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Films Warns Against Nazism By Harvey S. Karten "Celluloid Soldiers: Warner Bros.' Campaign Against Nazism," by Michael E. Birdwell, New York: NYU Press, 2001. A book review by Harvey Karten, film\_critic@compuserve.com. Politicians pursuing the "family" vote regularly chime in like critic Michael Medved about the harmful effects of film on theatergoers, particularly the young. "'The Basketball Diaries' has led to an increase of heroin use in teenagers," says one. "'Pulp Fiction' shares the blame for the increase of gun use in junior high schools," asserts another. "James Bond encourages the drinking of martinis, shaken not stirred," insists a third. Motion pictures influence our thinking. How could they not? We sit in a darkened space, focused on little other than our popcorn and the big screen, as heroes from Humphrey Bogart to Tom Cruise spin their tales across the celluloid. But to what extent do they influence the way we actually act? Pondering and debating that unresolved issue should give us something to talk about at cocktail parties for years to come. Do filmmakers actually WANT us to behave in a certain way? Probably: to the extent that they supply us with propaganda, or, what theater people call agitprop. One of the best examples of passionate partisanship involves the case of Harry Warner, one of the founders of the illustrious Warner Bros. studio, who, during the 1930's, was so incensed by Hitler's actions in Europe and so disgusted by the isolationist views of the American government and a majority of its people that he set out to influence everyone from F.D. Roosevelt to backwoods 'billies to see that the policies of the Third Reich endangered this country as well as the continent of Europe. While the other major studios pandered to the German fascists by doing business with them throughout the thirties, Harry Warner exploited his celluloid soap-box for all its worth, backing up his lobbying efforts with at least four motion picture productions unique in their evocation of Germany's evil. The heroism of this lone

ranger might not be remembered by today's world had Michael E. Birdwell not written "Celluloid Soldiers: Warner Bros.' Campaign Against Nazism." Birdwell's prose makes the heart beat faster as we join the author in loathing groups that had their own axes to grind in the U.S. during from 1933 to 1945--organizations whose names may have changed but whose professional haterseven today spew their venom against immigrants, Jews, African-Americans and other minorities whom they consider at the very least not to be 100% American. Some of Birdwell's scholarly but passionate statements might be describing activities in the year 2001 rather than movements that should have died a lingering and painful death during the thirties. Birdwell states: "Many Americans knew that Jews played a prominent role in the film monopoly. [One] vicious handbill read, 'Boycott the Movies! Hollywood is the Sodom and Gomorrah!'" What's missing in today's more subtle broadsides against Hollywood is the mention of Jews as the target of abhorrence, but The Pacific Coast Anticommunist Federation of that time had no problem declaring "international Jewry controls vice--dope--gambling. Buy Gentile. Employ Gentile. Vote Gentile." Birdwell discusses Harry Warner's attempts to counteract the malice by his productions of anti-fascist movies, the most arresting being his analysis of the film "Sergeant York," starring Gary Cooper as the title hero of World War I--an uneducated Tennessee mountain person who killed more Germans than Vassily Vaitsev but who turned pacifist immediately following the war to end all wars. When Alvin C. York came to his senses in the late thirties, he stumped for intervention. As Warner saw the prospect for waking up the world community to the dangers of Nazism, he convinced a reluctant York to give his permission for a portrayal of his life. "Sergeant York," one of the most influential archetypes of agitprop cinema, emerged. President Roosevelt may have been more affected by the attack on Pearl Harbor than on this movie, but both Harry Warner and Alvin York deserve monuments for their work in splashing cold water on the faces of a largely indifferent America. In the same manner, Birdwell--and the NYU university press, must be commended for its short but thoroughly researched study about the impact of media writ small on politics and American thinking in general...  
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During the 1930s many Americans avoided thinking about war erupting in Europe, believing it of little relevance to their own lives. Yet, the Warner Bros. film studio embarked on a virtual crusade to alert Americans to the growing menace of Nazism. Polish-Jewish immigrants Harry and Jack Warner risked both reputation and fortune to inform the American public of the insidious threat Hitler's regime posed throughout the world. Through a score of films produced during the 1930s and early 1940s--including the pivotal Sergeant York--the Warner Bros. studio marshaled its forces to influence the American conscience and push toward intervention in World War II. Celluloid Soldiers offers a compelling historical look at Warner Bros.'s efforts as the only major studio to promote anti-Nazi activity before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Celluloid Soldiers contributes significantly to our understanding of how Warner Bros. crusaded against fascism from the middle 1930s to Pearl Harbor. Drawing on extensive archival research, Birdwell provides particularly lively discussions of Alvin York's conversion to interventionism during the making of Sergeant York and of the 1941 Nye-Clark Committee investigations of 'premature anti-fascism' in Hollywood."-Charles Maland,University of Tennessee"A compact, compelling, and controversial as a Warner Bros. classic. . . . A strongly executed tour de force." -Journal of American History"Birdwell fruitfully charts the film company's laudable and outspoken stance against Nazism amid the politically charged yet divided loyalties of 1930s' Hollywood."-History (The Journal of the Historical Association),Oct. 2001"This study of the Warner Bros. Studio in relation to the coming of World War II will be a lasting contribution, not only on the impact of media on our nation's policiesa topic of concern for most thoughtful peoplebut also for academics in popular culture studies."-Peter Rollins,Editor-in-Chief, Film History:An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies"Contributes significantly to our understanding of how Warner Bros. crusaded against fascism from the middle 1930s to Pearl Harbor. Drawing on extensive archival research, Birdwell provides particularly lively discussions of Alvin York's conversion to interventionism during the making of Sergeant York and of the 1941 Nye-Clark Committee investigations of 'premature anti-fascism' in Hollywood." - Charles Maland,University of TennesseeAbout the AuthorMichael E. Birdwell is an Assistant Professor in History at Tennessee Tech and Curator of Alvin C. York's Papers. His work has been published in Film History, Literature/Film Quarterly, The Columbia Companion to Film, and several other journals.