

KENNEDY HELPED CENSOR NEWSREEL, COMMONS LEARNS

Britain Asked Aid of Envoy on Film Critical of Her Policy in Czech Crisis, Simon Says

LABOR HITS 'NEW TYRANNY'

Ambassador Asserts He Only Passed Request Along to the Hays Organization

By **FERDINAND KUHN Jr.**

Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LONDON, Nov. 23.—The British Government acknowledged today for the first time that it had asked Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy to help in suppressing parts of a newsreel that had been critical of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's policy during the crisis in September.

The offending newsreel included interviews with Wickham Steed and A. J. Cummings, political editor of The News Chronicle, both of whom protested against the partitioning of Czechoslovakia.

"His Majesty's Government considered that certain passages of the newsreel which was being shown at the time of the Prime Minister's conversations with Hitler at Godesberg might have a prejudicial effect upon the negotiations," said Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer, answering a question in the House of Commons.

"The Ambassador of the United States, I understand, thought it right to indicate this to a member of the Hays organization, which customarily deals with matters of this kind. It was brought to the attention of Paramount News, who, from a sense of public duty and in the general interest, decided to make certain excisions from the newsreel."

Sir John was asked whether any precedent for this sort of action existed. There were shouts of "Answer" and "A new tyranny" from the Labor benches, but he coolly answered that no precedent was needed.

Other Instances Cited

"Isn't it a fact," asked Philip J. Noel Baker, Laborite, "that four films of the March of Time series have been suppressed in the last six months and is Sir John aware that this government censorship is very much resented in the country?"

Sir John replied that he did not know of other cases but said that "in the present case His Majesty's Government is grateful to the Ambassador of the United States."

"I am glad to think the Ambassador of the United States and ourselves are in complete accord," Sir John added.

As this bombardment of angry questions descended upon Sir John, one Labor member demanded to know whether the House of Commons should not be consulted "before the government establishes censorship." Another called for the assurance that the precedent for the "censorship" would not be used in the future. But Sir John, in his best legalistic manner, replied:

"Censorship means the exercise of some compulsory powers. There is nothing of the sort in this case. A representation was made to the Ambassador of a friendly government here who was good enough and thought it right to take action which tended to promote European peace."

Later by a stroke of luck in the

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balloting Geoffrey Mander, a Liberal member, won the right to bring up the subject of censorship a full debate on Dec. 7. On this occasion the whole Labor party will return to the attack over the Paramount incident, which is regarded as a perfect example of undercurrent pressure of the kind Fleet Street already fears in the case of news papers.

The suppression of the Paramount newsreel last September already had been reported but today's was the first official account of the affair.

Kennedy's Own Version

LONDON, Nov. 23 (AP).—Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy's own version of the incident raised in the House of Commons today by Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was that he merely passed along the British request to the office of Will Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers-Distributors of America.

Mr. Kennedy said it was "inaccurate to give the impression" that he "personally took any action which caused the newsreel to be changed."

"Complexities" Are Cited

There was a general reluctance to be quoted here last night concerning what American film officials called "the complexities" of British censorship of American films, which were the subject of discussion in the House of Commons earlier in the day.

Although the censorship in question was known to have occurred about six weeks ago, no official report has yet been made to the home offices here, according to the Paramount Newsreel and the Motion Picture Distributors of America, otherwise known as the Hays organization.

The Paramount office said a request for particulars was cabled last night to its British subsidiary. The Hays office said no action had been taken. The attitude in both

offices was that their British organizations apparently took the matter in their stride, as a matter of expediency.

More detailed information was obtainable, however, from the March of Time, because of the arrival in this country of Richard de Rochemont, European editor of these films.

He explained that the semi-weekly newsreels for British consumption, such as British Paramount, British Pathe and other American-owned organizations, were exposed to continuous calls from interested bodies as well as government departments concerned in the subjects they presented. They were under the practical necessity of responding to such "representations" to such extent they might seem wise.

Mr. de Rochemont said that four issues of the March of Time had been barred in England during the three years that they have been sent there, and frequent cuts have

been made in others in order to secure a showing.

"Since we do not permit these countries to influence the editorial policy of our American edition, we cannot ask any preferred treatment from them," said Mr. de Rochemont. "What they want cut out, is cut out, and what they consider acceptable for public presentation is released to the theatres. We cannot question the authority of England and France in their own countries. The March of Time has never been released in Germany nor is it likely that it will be.

"We have never asked the American Embassy to intercede for us with the British Board of Censors. Neither has the Embassy ever asked us to make any cuts. Such requests come to us direct from the censorship board, and as a matter of fact the British censors have frequently been willing to meet us half way and arrive at a satisfactory compromise."