

At the Embassy Guild

IF MOSCOW STRIKES, a documentary based on "Modern Arms and Free Men" by Vannevar Bush; screen adaptation by Ted Wear; edited by Jack Bush; photographed by Nicholas Cavaliere; produced by Richard De Rochemont for The March of Time, Inc.

"If Moscow Strikes," the March of Time's documentary feature at the Embassy Guild, is commendably faithful in tone and content to the Vannevar Bush book, "Modern Arms and Free Men." Therefore this offering can no more be dismissed lightly than its text—the evolution of scientific warfare and America's possible survival of atomic attack through armament. Heading this country's scientific and atomic research divisions during the last war, the author, it will be recalled, wrote a practical and optimistic treatise on modern civilization at bay which no layman could ignore.

Producer Richard de Rochemont and his associates, in projecting on film the staggering implications of Dr. Bush's authoritative data and his pattern for preservation, have assembled a camera summary of weapon development and usage through the two World Wars, with careful editing and narrated excerpts from the original text. And this unique project is framed in a typical March of Time format that utilizes Dr. Bush as a visiting college lecturer.

The entire film is a sturdily pictorial record, with the contributions by the Army, the Air Force, the Navy and the British Ministry of Supply and other sources sincerely meant to underline Dr. Bush's plea for national preparedness. The learned author himself is no less pictorial, a firm-voiced, kind-faced man whose manner suggests a genial composite of Percy Kilbride and the late Will Rogers.

Curiously, though, except for the high-gearred finale, when animated drawings depict an enemy atomic invasion and an organized counter-attack, the authenticity far exceeds the total impact. For all the historical pertinence of the initial sequences, the first portion is familiar and overly detailed. And for once, the March of Time's unique man-on-the-street canvass, expanded as the author's sounding board in a homey town hall lecture in Waterville, Me., seems contrived and superfluous.

Most surprising of all, a distinguished spokesman's analysis of a bristling planet that may or may not weather an atomic storm is singularly lacking, at least to the eye, in shock value. As for the new title, it stems, apparently, from Dr. Bush's admirably cryptic appraisal of that nation during the forum. Dr. Bush's lecture, "If Moscow Strikes," is interesting, significant and highly civilized. It should have been dynamite.—