

Truth Is Stranger: 'Traitor' to Hero

A preview of "The Counterfeit Traitor," opening at the DeMille on April 17, was held recently for the film's most knowledgeable and severe critic, Eric Erickson, the subject of the Perlberg-Seaton spy thriller. The Brooklyn-born Swedish business man who became a spy weighs his film image and finds it not wanting.

CPYRGHT

By Joseph Morgenstern

Among the unforeseeable pitfalls that a man must face when he signs on as a spy is the possibility that no one will make a movie of his exploits. His mission may go haywire, as in the case of Messrs. Powers and Abel, who are alive but not cinematic, or he may succeed in becoming an unsung hero, which is less remunerative than being a sung hero.

Eric Erickson, one of the more audacious double-dealers employed by the United States in World War II, had the manifold good fortune of emerging from his adventures alive, intact, successful and celebrated. One day last week, Mr. Erickson sat himself down in a screening room in the Paramount Building to see, for the first time, the Technicolored fruits of his efforts, a film called "The Counterfeit Traitor" in which he is incarnated by William Holden.

Director's Query

As soon as the lights went up after the preview, George Seaton, the director and author of the screenplay, said:

"Still talking to me, Eric?"

Momentarily subdued and obviously moved, Mr. Erickson said:

"It's a remarkable picture, George." Certain events had been embellished, rearranged or borrowed from other espionage cases, Mr. Erickson said later, but he thought the movie was entirely authentic in spirit and "85 per cent correct" in the specifics of the story.

The Right Circles

Based on Alexander Klein's book, "The Counterfeit Traitor" recounts Mr. Erickson's experiences as a Swedish oil executive who adopted a pro-Nazi attitude in public, ingratiated himself with German officials in Stockholm, made frequent visits to oil refineries in the German heartland, and supplied the Allies with detailed information on how to bomb them out of existence. For his labors, he suffered the opprobrium of the Swedish press and of most of his friends for the duration of the war, until the real nature of his activities could be revealed.

Born in Brooklyn 72 years ago,

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