

SALT OF THE EARTH

The Story of a Film

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Part One

AMERICA 1951

I

Among those declared creative outlaws under the industry's Waldorf declaration, following the 1951 Un-American Committee's renewed Hollywood melee, was Paul Jarrico. A screenwriter, author of *Tom, Dick and Harry*, *Thousands Cheer*, *Song of Russia* and *Las Vegas Story*—a record of startling Hollywood catholicity, he is the son of a lawyer, and love of justice rated high among his passions. No one languished in his presence, neither friend nor foe. Something recompensatory was being fashioned of whatever was going on. He nurtured his faiths into a posture of constant, positive expectancy. He would undertake tasks with the air of having accomplished them by the assumption of them. In the many years of our association I do not recall Paul having said anything was difficult. It had to be done? "See you later." He was on his way alerted to all the possibilities: of laughter, of illegal actions against us, and of people through whom our undertakings could be guaranteed.

Ten minutes after he was fired by RKO for refusal to answer those stock committee questions, questions which the committee swore could be answered with a yes or a no—emasculatation guaranteed with either answer—he and Adrian Scott had begun to develop several stories for independent production. When we discovered that we were each of us proceeding toward identical goals, we determined to join forces. I called upon my attorney, Ben Margolis, to discuss setting up a company.

"Simon Lazarus has been talking to me about just this sort of thing."

That led us to Simon Lazarus. Simon had been a motion Picture theatre operator almost his entire adult life. In 1942 he had proposed the organization of an independent film production company to me, which he wished to set up and finance. But that was a time of war, a time in which we wished to be closer to the industry, its people and its war efforts. I rejected his invitation, perhaps not only somewhat abruptly, but also without recognition of the creative impulse that motivated him. Now, eight years later, I was talking with him again. I knew he was no longer the man of means he had been. I knew he

could not finance the undertakings I would describe for him. But he could vouchsafe us something we needed as much as money. To discover that we were not creatively dead—in the appraisal of others than ourselves.

“The blacklisted! They’re like gold laying in the streets. We’ll make good pictures and we’ll make money. Who is in the company?”

With that encouragement I outlined our thinking, enumerated the distinguished writers whom we could enlist. We would prepare screen plays, produce, direct, organize a company and staff it. Obviously we would have to borrow money for the production. But we would repay every borrowed dollar plus interest before we received any returns, support ourselves until we had completed the making of the film. Would he accept the presidency of the company?

“You have to ask?” he replied. “I’ve been waiting a long time to do something worthwhile. Yes, I’ll be your president. And I’ll sell a piece of property and give you ten thousand dollars to begin to operate.”

He leaned back, shaking his head slowly in reflection. “What a mistake that we didn’t start this eight years ago. You must never be afraid of independence. But I guess there’s no danger for you any more. You got independence the hard way. But you got it. O.K. Let’s go. And don’t wait too long. Bring the boys here tomorrow.”

Simon’s eagerness to associate himself with our company settled the matter of production. It gave us confidence that the country in which we had grown up would permit us to use the skills we had developed over the years without using an axe upon ourselves or burrowing into the anonymous black market. There were alternatives to self-erasure. We were about to take an appeal to the people of the country, in films.

The first of these “people” was coming through the door of the Hollywood restaurant where I waited at the bar. He was a man with whom I had made a luncheon appointment, hoping he would help us finance a picture company of our own. But there was a stranger with him and my heart fell. I feared to impart what I had to say in the presence of a stranger, who might well warn my friend against being

“caught dead” with so incredible a plan. The pleasantries over, the inevitable, “What’s on your mind?” followed.

I talked of people first—blacklisted and severed from their life’s work. I spoke of their talent. Then of the money a few of us had saved, available to the last penny to help build this undertaking.

The man I did not know took over. Light blue eyes peered from a ruddy, firm face. His questions came thick and fast. They were well conceived. For many of them I had no answers and said so. His questions continued. I knew I was dealing with a man whose mind was trained to search out flaws. He found many of them. I asked that he stop searching for others. I was not prepared to defend the plan as a normal business undertaking. It was a plan “in extremis” and had to be seen in that light.

“Do you mean to tell me that you’re going into something without knowing that it can work out?”

“If we don’t we’ll never begin.”

“Do you expect me to put money into this moving picture venture without its making any practical sense whatsoever? You want to make a product—which you don’t even know you’ll be permitted to make—and the sale of which seems even more dubious. What’s the point of all this?”

“I don’t think the people of the country go along....”

“People of the country! They’ll never even know you failed. These stories you’re talking about. They sound pretty radical to me. Why don’t you make a nice mystery story?”

“The country has a surfeit of them now. The only thing radical about our stories is that they’re about real people.”

“What’s that got to do with anything? Movies are for entertainment.”

“I agree. But I think you’re as entertaining as any businessman I could make up.”

“What’s entertaining about me?”

“You’ve been good for me. You’ve played the role of businessman excellently. You’ve pointed out a number of flaws. Having them pointed out will be very helpful. I thank you.”

“You mean you’re going ahead with this?”

"We have to! A few men have declared us creatively dead. We have permission to walk around and talk to you and breathe and eat and sleep. But we are not allowed to communicate—not as long as we live. We are going to try. We have that much faith in the people of this country—faith that they will make it possible. I want to thank you both for listening to me and I don't hold it against you that you don't find our plan prepossessing."

"I'll give you five thousand dollars," he said, "to begin with."

Before I could look at him to check on what I thought my ears heard, the man I had made the date with said, "I'll give you twenty-five hundred."

"What?" said the ruddy-faced man. "I said I'd give five thousand. What do you mean you'll give twenty-five hundred? You invited me here. If I give five thousand, you'll give five thousand, too."

"Okay. I'll give five thousand."

"To begin with!"

"To begin with."

The stranger looked back at me.

"Do you know why I've given you this money? You're a fighter. Maybe you're a radical. Maybe very radical. And I don't go for that. You might even be a purple Communist. But I think you think what you're doing is right. Then go ahead and do it. But make it a little funny, huh?"

"It will be entertainment."

"That's a promise."

"Yes. It's a promise. Naturally, I don't want your money now. Our company is not yet organized. But there is a matter we must discuss. When I accept your money, we'll have to give you a note. If you would rather not be on record in the company's books, I can have the note made out to me and then endorse it over to you."

"Why should I not be on record?"

"I have to be very frank about this. The Un-American Activities Committee might...."

"... ask me how I see fit to invest my money? I'd like to see them try! I'd like to meet the man in this country who will tell me where to

earn a dividend! I'm getting interested in this now. *I want to be on your books.*"

My friend said, "I don't."

"Okay. Give me your money. I'll be on the books for ten thousand—for the time being. "

Then he thought quietly for a moment.

"Do you mean to tell me that somebody might actually come to me and ask me if I dared put my money in what my judgment dictated to me was a fine business proposition?"

"They might—because of us."

"Do you mean to tell me that somebody might come to me and tell me I can't make any money through you?"

"It's possible. My advice is that you not be on the books. I don't see what benefit you can derive from it."

"That's *your* advice?"

"It is."

"I don't accept it. I started to say I'd raise my loan to seventy-five hundred. But let's not do it that way. I'm going to get a group of businessmen together and raise quite a little money for you. I'm beginning to enjoy this. I may not have as much money as some of the businessmen in this country who oppose you, but I've earned it with just as much sweat and with just as much relish. I'm glad I bumped into you here. Give 'em hell. Who do they think they are anyway? Telling you whether you can work or not! Telling me where to invest my money! Waiter! The check!"

The following day I received a call from him. I was to meet him that evening at his house. He would have a group of friends there.

Within a few weeks we had thirty-five thousand dollars pledged. One-third of the budget of our picture. All from businessmen. It wasn't easy to get. But in most instances, when the chips were down, the men would not refuse to gamble on a democratic America.

Paul Jarrico, Simon Lazarus and I met with our attorneys, Ben Margolis and Charles Katz. We opened a bank account. We deposited thirty-five thousand dollars. Independent Productions Corporation now had capital. Only sixty-five thousand more to raise and we could make a film—if we had a script, a crew, equipment, and a cast.

II

Four months later we had several stories in work. They were going badly. We were worried. We had spent fifteen years in Hollywood. We knew stories written for effect. Did we measure up to the requirements of stories about real people and real situations? In one instance the story chosen simply would not illustrate the people in it. It was the wrong structure and background for what we hoped to express. In another the idea in the story came out as an idea—in discussion—and would not dramatize itself. We had fifty thousand dollars in the bank by now. Money, it turned out, was not our problem—not at that juncture. We were the problem. We were discovering the vast distance between intention and skill. We were meeting daily and all day and all night and making very little progress.

Toward the end Paul Jarrico had gone away on a few weeks vacation with his family. He had heard of an extraordinary strike in progress in New Mexico. The strike had been called against New Jersey Zinc in Bayard, New Mexico, by Local 890 of the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union. This old and militant union had been expelled from the C.I.O. for alleged Communist influence. The local union membership was largely Mexican-American. Several months before, when the strikers were faced with a Taft-Hartley injunction prohibiting the miners from picketing, the women of the local union's Ladies Auxiliary had taken over the picket line from their miner-husbands and were holding it with dramatic bravery and resourcefulness. The Jarricos drove there.

Ten days later Paul came back to Hollywood, filled with the sights and sounds of that little town in New Mexico. His eyes glowed as he regaled us with descriptions of the women, the men, the community; a feast of incidents, told with the creative enthusiasm of a writing man who had seen a "story."

"This is it," said Paul. "All there, ready to study, live. If we could only get Mike to write it!"

Mike was Michael Wilson, screenwriter, freshly blacklisted, and brother-in-law to Paul. Winner of an Academy Award for the screenplay *A Place in the Sun*, he had also been nominated for an award for

his screenplay *Five Fingers*. Quiet, intense, soft-spoken, precise, he was forever curling a lock of his prematurely iron-gray hair with his forefinger. When he was spoken to, his steel-blue eyes lifted, shot a hard glance at whoever addressed him, and then he replied tersely. When the intensity of look and speech subsided, a wry gaiety appeared. He was never off alert. Observation at three hundred sixty degrees was a compulsion in him.

If there was a profoundly funny way to put something Paul Jarico was attempting it. If there was a profoundly incisive way of putting something Mike Wilson was at it. Paul never saw anything but potentialities. Mike saw difficulties standing squarely upon the Adam's apple of all possibilities, and would proceed, soberly, to the rescue, because he hated to let a good possibility down. Mike and Paul were fast friends. When the three of us were together there wasn't enough fear around to put on the point of a needle. How good it would be to have him.

But Mike was, at last, deep into work on a novel. It meant a great deal to him. Would he give it up, and go to Silver City, and take on a screen play without any assurance that six months of punishing work would ever be realized in a film?

He took on the assignment, but with one proviso. "Fellows, we've got to give up trying to write stories about real people from our point of view. I think that's why the stories you have been doing are not coming off. If I do this story, I want to do a story from the point of view of the people of Local 890. And if I do this story, they are going to be the censors of it and the real producers of it... in point of view of its content. If you think something's great and they think it's lousy, they're going to win. And vice versa. I may have to spend a lot of time there. And I can't make any promises about how soon this script will be done. I've got a lot of reorientation to do. Terms satisfactory?"

The terms were satisfactory. And Mike left for Local 890. He was there for a number of weeks. When he returned he said, "It's all there and nothing's there. It's not a matter of situation. It's people. It's a story of people and the conflict is very complex. There are battles for equality taking place there on so many levels I can hardly unskein them yet myself."

He shifted in his chair. He didn't really want to capsule his concept yet. But he was going to—a complex, many-peopled screen play—in a paragraph.

“Well, the core—it's something—something like this: A love story. A Mexican-American miner and his wife. In love. And divided—by everything outside themselves. He, consumed by hatred of the discrimination that surrounds his people and his family, Can't think of anything else. She, feeling ignored—overburdened—despairs of life itself. Their situation becomes intolerable. The men strike. And they hold fast. The company—finds a legal maneuver, and prepares to break the strike. The men are lost. Desperate women, suddenly appear out of nowhere—so far as their husbands are concerned—and offer to take over the battle. And do. And overnight—they become important. The struggle for equality moves to a new level, which includes the old. Because the men can't overcome company discrimination against them unless they overcome their own against their women. A people will either unify itself for the real struggle—or fail in it. That's it! The theme: The indivisibility of equality. The story: A husband's struggle to accept as his equal the wife he loves. A wife's insistence that love include respect. The resolution: The women lead the men to victory on all fronts because in social struggle *they* call on and embrace every living soul in their community—the men included.”

Mike clenched his teeth and said, “Now—go away and leave me be.”

Two months, three months went by. Mike was dour, silent and curling his forelock furiously. But there was nothing for us to read. And then one day there came a treatment. We hung on with our figurative fingernails as we read. And afterwards, when we had completed it, we knew, the way you know that you're breathing, that it breathed. And we said, “Yes, Mike....” But he paid scant attention to us, although he listened. He took off for Silver City.

When he returned, several weeks later, we knew by his eyes, by his face, and by the reduced speed with which he twirled his forelock, that he had passed his own first test. “There have got to be some

changes." Then came the stories of his conferences with the people in Silver City.

In the treatment, when the women take over the picket line and the men are left to handle domestic chores, Ramón, the strike captain, a male supremacist, starts having an affair with a young widow. This, Mike informed us, had to be changed. The men objected to the sequence. What about the women, we asked. The women had insisted it stay in.

"Oh, you're all so pure!" they said. "You don't do things like that?"

The objecting, adamant men said, "Maybe a few have. But that doesn't make it true. It shows the men up in a bad light."

"It stays in," said the women. "Let it be a warning."

"Is this story to insult us?" asked the men.

Mike said, "It's going out because of another reason. It isn't typical. But beyond that, it raises the old stereotype of the sensual, promiscuous, Latin male. It's a phoney."

Then he discussed another scene in the treatment. Just before the strike began, Ramón, with part of his last pay check, knowing it was to be the last in quite a while, bought a bottle of whiskey. The men hadn't time to comment on this scene before the women objected, "Our husbands are not drunkards," they said.

"That goes out too," said Mike.

"You see," he said to us, "these are perfectly legitimate dramatic scenes and illustrations. In a script in which you're after drama for its own sake, they'd be perfectly acceptable. But we're dealing with something else. Not just people. A people. And you don't necessarily express them through naturalistic detail. You have to really synthesize them, all of them; the weaknesses and the virtues, until the individual expresses a real element of the whole and something not atypical of the whole, even though a variant part of it. The point is this: discrimination has forced these people into a conscious as well as unconscious unity. They have respect for themselves as a whole, because they've learned that the individual doesn't get anywhere by himself. The fact is they're a people. It's a beautiful thing to see and to reflect. I'm a little in awe of the job. I've got a lot of work to do."

Six months later there was a second draft of a screen play. And we believed in it. Not without reservations, but with absolute faith in its final form. And the miners and their wives believed in it. We took it to the International Union in Denver, and they believed in it. After a year, and two previous failures, we had the basis for a motion picture. Now we could move the script into final shooting form—and organize the production.

Simon Lazarus, as president of our company, Independent Productions Corporation, called upon Mr. Roy M. Brewer, the international representative of the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees union in Hollywood. It represented almost all the back-lot workers in the industry. Simon Lazarus, who had been a theater exhibitor in Los Angeles for thirty years, was one of the first to recognize this union, and he had supported its efforts to organize the theater projectionists. He had asked for the assignment of meeting with Mr. Brewer. An official of a local of the union accompanied Mr. Lazarus, proud to vouch for his pro-union history. Simon Lazarus asked Mr. Brewer for a crew for our picture. Brewer, Simon reported to us, told him that the Hollywood Ten had been run out of the industry for good. He also told Simon that no one who refused to cooperate with the Un-American Activities Committee would get a crew or make a picture and that if Simon proceeded with such people Simon would be destroyed.

Roy M. Brewer, rehabilitator of Eddie Dmytryk, “toughest anti-communist in town,” was above all a man of many hats: International Representative of the I.A.T.S.E. in Hollywood; Chairman of the Hollywood AF of L film council; Chairman of the Motion Picture Industry Council; Champion of the “rehabilitation” (blacklisting) system for the motion picture industry; the industry’s volunteer liaison man with the American Legion; leading light of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals. Mr. Brewer was the man of destiny in this time of expiation for past over-zealousness by present, conducted, gut-spilling. Many of the producers had allergies to blood. But they didn’t have to look far for someone with stomach for it. Their boy was waiting in the wings, wings which he had had some part in setting into position. The producers gave him all the

titles, all the chairs, all the pleasure of power. Hence, despite the fact that he was only a lowly international labor representative in a community which worshiped status, he was able to say to Simon Lazarus, with all the authority of a monarch, that if he proceeded with such persons, he would be destroyed.

To Lazarus's reply that the right to engage in business, to employ and associate himself with others, was his, that the union could not deprive him of that right, that he wished a contract and a list of available men, Mr. Brewer retorted that if Lazarus knew what was good for him, he would get out of this thing before it was too late.

How were we to obtain a crew? We were not going to make any pictures, so the labor "leader" of Hollywood had decreed! What were we to do? Sue the union, since their refusal to provide us with craftsmen was illegal under the Taft-Hartley law? But we attacked Taft-Hartley in our script. Shoot with a non-union crew? We had a moral right, since a union crew was denied us. But it was wormwood in our mouths. We must look for a cameraman first.

Paul searched. Many liked the script. The idea of the film was challenging to them. But it was clearly dangerous. They feared they might lose their union cards if they worked with us. It was tough, but they couldn't voluntarily end their careers, could they?

The summer was passing. The good weather was rolling by. Go to Mexico? Make the picture there? No! This picture was going to be made in the United States of America. Attempt to obtain a Mexican cameraman? A Mexican crew? Would they be permitted into the country? Wait a minute! There was a *documentary* union in New York, Paul suggested. It was affiliated with the CIO. Get them.

I was off to New York. This had to be done quickly. There was casting to do, and much work with Mike on the script from my own, the director's, point of view. I wasn't altogether pleased with the character of Ramón. In elevating women to their proper rank as equal individuals we had denigrated Ramón excessively. It was almost as if we couldn't raise women without trampling on the men. The men had lessons to learn. But they were brave and determined working men. Ramón, thematically, carried the line of ancient strug-

gle of his people. He had to retain the full measure of his valor as well as carry the full weight of his weakness. It was not there—yet!

In New York the documentary union people were most interested. But terribly afraid. What would happen to them if they worked with us? We were—well—*hot!* And they were just then in negotiation for merger with the I.A.T.S.E.—the very union which had just refused us a crew. They talked and talked and finally agreed. The following day they called for more discussion.

I understood their dilemma. And they understood it. It was a crippling business for them: to wish to make this film. To have respect for the thing wished for. Not to know whether or not to fear their fears. And to be afraid to find out! Could I give them ten days? By then they'd know. I couldn't wait that long in New York. Well then, yes—they would come. The details would be ironed out. I returned home to casting.

From the very beginning, the role of Esperanza, the leading woman's role, had been designed by Mike for Gale Sondergaard, my wife. For Ramón we had decided to use a well-known Hollywood actor who also was blacklisted. One of the purposes of this company was to engage the blacklisted in their professions again. And now, before we had even really begun, we were jolted by recognition of a primary obligation. We had thought of ourselves as "the blacklisted." And we were the veriest newcomers. Culturally and socially, as well as politically and economically, vast numbers of our American people had been blacklisted for centuries. Had they not been, we might never have been. Were we, the new blacklisted, to blacklist the older ones? Keep them unexpressed and unfulfilled? We were preparing a film of the Mexican-American people. But we had selected two "Anglos" to play the leads! Oh, we had planned to use Mexican-Americans in all the small parts. But we couldn't entrust Mexican-Americans with the *important* Mexican-American roles. The Hollywood tradition! And we were carriers.

The first humiliating recognition of our discriminatory inheritance was sufficient. We knew what we had to do. Perhaps the hardest task for me was breaking it to Gale. For months she had been grow-

ing, slowly, happily, into this role. Her immediate reply was, "Of course. How unfeeling we have all been!"

On the heels of that realization the documentary crew in New York notified us that they required a twelve-week shooting schedule. We had planned on six. To me their demand was a refusal wrapped in the bows and ribbons of polite escape. My colleagues disagreed. They believed I was unsympathetic to the new problems we posed to film people who knew only about documentaries. They were unfamiliar with the technique of a story-film. Our kind of shooting was more organized, swifter. I was to return to New York, and explain all of this. However, whatever the compromise, our film must be made with a union crew. Summer was rolling by with terrifying speed. What came first, a crew or a cast?

I flew to New Mexico for two days, made some tests of various miners and their wives and daughters, and flew back with the film. Most of our company opposed the use of non-professionals in the leading roles. The roles were too complex, too delicate in nuance. I did not agree. I remembered unforgettable performances of equally non-professional Chinese in the play *Roar China* that I had directed for the Theatre Guild in New York.

But, as a necessary precaution, we telephoned friends in Mexico and asked them to search for two leading actors and supplied details concerning the roles. Then we returned to the question of non-professionals enacting them. It seemed to me that my colleagues were confusing two distinct categories—the actor who plays a character foreign to him and a people who enact themselves.

To back up my opinion, I related an incident of the final dress rehearsal of *Roar China*. The Chinese in the cast had been recruited from the restaurants, laundries, gift shops in New York's Chinatown. It had been a long and arduous day. On the stage was a battleship with rising guns, around which sampans moved, in eleven inches of water in which men drowned.

The technical problems were so many that we rehearsed scenes in the order in which the technicians could solve them, rather than as the action demanded. A young Chinese student played "Number One Boy" on the British battleship. Early in the play he was to be shoved

off the gangplank into the water and be saved by a sampan. Later in the play, in deep, personal depression, he was to hang himself before the cabin door of the captain of the ship. We had rehearsed the hanging scene first and, because of faulty rigging, he had come within an inch of losing his life. He was, for some time, in a state of traumatic shock. But we had only one day in which to complete the full rehearsal. This was the inescapable commercial pressure upon us. When we proceeded to the scene in which he was to fall into the water, breaking the impact without any hurt to himself, he was incapable of doing it.

He extended his hand to break his fall, revealing the depth of the water to be what it was—eleven inches! In the next attempt he landed on his feet, then on one foot, then on the other hand. An hour had gone by. I was at my wit's end. I tried a hundred suggestions. They failed. I sought to cajole him into recovery, argue him into it, upbraid him into it. And finally, in a state of utter compulsion myself, I asked him whether he wished me to pull off my clothes and show him how to do it. I weighed twice as much as he! If I did not fear to do this "simple" fall, why should he? As I spoke I pulled off one article of clothing after another. Finally I stood upon the gangplank in my shorts and, declaiming loudly upon the simplicity of the action and forgetting where I was and what I was doing, I *dove* into the eleven inches of water and landed on my nose!

I arose with blood streaming down my face and onto my body, all the while proclaiming the "simplicity" of the fall, and offering to do it again. The Anglo actors on the stage were convulsed with laughter at my athletic dive, the flowing blood and my utterly ridiculous assurances of the success of my demonstration. Not a single Chinese on the stage, and there were more than seventy, so much as smiled. Then without any perceptible sign of his intention, a very old Chinese with purest white, silky hair and soft, flowing beard took one step toward the young man and barely touched the side of the youth's arm. The young man walked to the platform, closed his eyes, and fell flat upon the water. The Caucasian professionals ceased laughing.

The relevant point in this story for us was that for the Chinese playing in it, *Roar China* was an act of love and pride, not of com-

merce. They weren't making careers for themselves. They were seeking to build affection in the heart of Americans for their country of cultural origin and its people. This was their dramatic stature. As they achieved it they not only "outplayed" the Caucasian professionals, but in scenes which included both groups it was only barely possible to see the professionals on the stage. The Chinese developed a homogeneity, a group presence, that endowed each individual with stature that was a gift from the whole. It brought a power in relaxation to them that few *actors* achieve. If they brought less skill, they brought the authority and dedication of their own persons and that incomparable thing—the reality of a people.

As I finished telling this story, our friends in Mexico telephoned. They had the perfect actress for us: Rosaura Revueltas. In addition they spoke of a Mexican actor who had left Mexico City only a few days before and must now be in Hollywood. If we could get him for the role—there was no one more suited to enact it as actor, person, and physical type. We expressed our interest in Miss Revueltas whom I had once met. We would communicate with her soon.

That evening I met with the actor. The following morning he had read the script. He proclaimed it the role he had been waiting all his life to play. We warned him that playing this role might permanently close Hollywood's doors to him. He dismissed the warning without concern. Did we realize what it meant to him to be able to express his national pride, his love of a character such as Ramón, the heroic struggles of his own people? He'd rather play this role than ten of the fattest Hollywood could trot out! At two days' notice he'd be ready to leave for Silver City.

Some time later, when I was ready to leave for Silver City, I called him. He asked to see me at breakfast the following morning. What a different fellow than the one I had first met. Apologetic, morose, he told me his problem. His agent had warned him against any association with us. It would sound the death-knell of his Hollywood career, which, miraculously, was just about to begin for fair. His agent had told him he had two parts for him in two studios, one part to follow the other. I must not misunderstand—he wanted terribly to play Ramón—he was born to play it—but! Renounce Hollywood?

And two roles? Even if they were just the same old Hollywood Mexicans! They were—it was—he meant—didn't I? I assured him that I did. I asked him to forget Ramón. Forgetfulness was the price everyone paid for remaining in the good graces of Hollywood that year, even to play a Hollywood Mexican. "Someday!" he said. "Yes," I replied, "Someday, someday!"

Mexican-American actors in Hollywood! The few with standing had either feared to talk with us, or, if they did, protested that their standards of living imprisoned them in the need to "keep in good with Hollywood."

I had read with a number of the bit players of Mexican origin. They were eager to join us, but because of the size of the role, not because of its meaning. They had little to lose or to offer. Pride in their cultural background was forgotten or had been abandoned. The men read "refinement" into the indomitable cultural militance of Ramón. The women brought Hollywood smiles and middle-class intercession to the unerupted volcano of Esperanza. They had lost the art of touching a neighbor's arm as the old Chinese had done in *Roar China*.

As I entered Paul's home to report on the loss of our Ramón, there was a telephone call for me from New York. It was a spokesman of the documentary crew to say that it was not joining us to make the film. After a full round of peripheral niceties I asked the spokesman for the true reason. In the ensuing silence I volunteered a question. "Is it the same old fright? The I.A.T.S.E.? I have to know!" A tension-filled pause. Then... "Yes."

I hung up the phone and sat shaking my head.

"I knew it when I left. It's hopeless. They're immobilized."

Paul and Mike spoke very quietly. We had to have a union crew. The documentary crew was the only one we had a chance of getting. I must return to New York. I must convince them.

"But..."

"We have to have them! We simply have to have them. You ought to go back right away. Crew comes before cast. How soon can you leave?"

III

En route to New York for another go at the documentary crew, I stopped at Silver City to scout locations. Those in which the “live” events had taken place were photographically magnificent and every one *boldly on public property!* Where would we go if the mine superintendents persuaded the local authorities to eject us?

I returned to the union hall and laid my concern before the local’s officers. We must find a privately owned five-hundred-acre ranch to which we could escape in case of difficulties. Large doubts were written upon their brows. Who among them knew anyone with a five-hundred-acre ranch? And especially anyone who would be willing to turn it over to a union project? Sitting in on the discussion was an Anglo miner, sixty or thereabouts, a man who had done almost everything a man could do in one lifetime. He told us he knew of a man, Alford Roos, rather elderly, who lived quite alone on a very large ranch, “a thousand acres or more, over in Vanadium.” Roos was an independent mine owner, had a lot of land under lease to some of the big mines. He was a brilliant man in many ways. Could read Arabic. Said he had been converted to Mohammedanism. He had been an explorer, archaeologist, inventor, writer—and was a very independent person. Couldn’t tell what he might do. Might throw you out, even shoot at you. But if I were willing to take the chance....

Did he know this gentleman? Yes, he had done some surveying on his property a few years back. Would he feel free to call him on the telephone and ask for an appointment for us? “Do it right now,” the miner said. He called and made an appointment immediately.

From the main road to the ranch house it was a mile drive down the bumpiest little dirt road an automobile had ever traveled. The house had to be approached by way of the kitchen door. On the ground immediately surrounding it was a mass of steel rails, old ore cars, barrels, pumps, drills, iron pipes and other invaluable authentic “props” for such a film as ours. The ranch house was located in a valley with gentle sloping hills rising at every angle away from its center. A half-mile down the deep, rocky arroyo that was the bed of the valley, the shaft of a mine was visible.

We knocked on the back door of the house and it was flung open immediately. There stood a very short and very thin man of seventy or more. He was dressed in an old T-shirt, trousers and a pair of sneakers. He looked at us for a long second, his small black eyes no less set than his hard, unshaven chin.

"Come in! Whisky or beer?"

He turned and led us through his kitchen into his living room. We told him beer as we walked in and he disappeared for refreshments. The room was more a museum than the living room of a dwelling. In one corner stood an assortment of some fifty rifles of various vintages. In another corner about the same number of spears. The walls were a mass of pictures from all parts of the world and heads of various animals. A solid gold Inca shrine gleamed with the reflected light of the late afternoon sun. Rough uncut stones were scattered on the tables, some having the outward aspect of precious varieties. Every chair in the room was covered with a rather old and, in some cases, very far gone animal skin. And over the whole of this room and its contents was spread a layer of cigarette ash an eighth to a quarter of an inch thick. We sat down on the edge of chairs.

The gentleman returned with the beer and began to talk as if we were honored guests who, having heard of him and his collections, had come to visit both as interesting landmarks of the area. His speech was New England, incisive, well enunciated and fashioned out of a large vocabulary. His black eyes darted as he spoke and his jaws clamped together frequently. He gave every indication of having a trigger-mind. When he paused in his description of his possessions, I spoke. I said that we had called on him to ask something of him and that I wished first to inform him about myself. I believed a man ought to know with whom he was talking.

"Who are you?" he asked. His eyes set and his jaws set and his small springy frame set and he was as quiet and attentive as he had been garrulous a moment earlier.

I told him our Hollywood history, the nature of our film, and finally placed before him our desire to use his ranch as an escape to private property if we encountered difficulty on public property. I was then, and am now, no poker player. But as I spoke I made a mental

note never to be drawn into playing the game against him. His face and every muscle were rigidly sealed against expression. Involuntarily my eyes sought the exits as I developed my story. I finished by adding that if our visit disturbed or embarrassed him we would leave.

He held his silence for a long moment, his unmoving eyes on me. Finally, he spoke.

"You're one of that Hollywood gang?"

"I am," I said, and was tempted to repeat my earlier promise of readiness to leave at once, when his second question came.

"You've been in jail?"

"Yes, sir. I have been."

"WELL! PUT IT THERE, OLD BOY, OLD BOY!" And with this he leaped up from his chair and shook my arm almost out of its socket! His seventy-year-old grip made me cringe. And his enthusiasm was no less fierce. His face was now aglow with dancing fires. Then he invited me to sit down again. He told me his views, past and present. He was a militant, arrogant, unregenerated Jeffersonian living presently with anger and shame. Then he stopped, held his peace for a moment and abruptly addressed me in a most businesslike tone.

"What do you want?"

"I want your ranch to escape to if we have to. We'll pay for the use of it."

"Escape, hell! You come here and shoot the whole damn thing here. I'll stand at the top of the hill with a gun in my hands and say, 'Yes, I've got the whole gang here. What're you going to do about it? This is a thousand acres of Jeffersonian America and don't any reactionary, un-American hoodlum put his foot on it!'"

A half-hour later I had left the ranch with a contract in my pocket and a thousand acres of the state of New Mexico enrolled against the censors and silencers. All that for one dollar down!

As I flew from New Mexico to New York over this great blossoming land, I found myself singing, and smiling as I sang. We had a script, fifty thousand dollars, a location site, a union of miners. And I began to outsoar the plane. This flight was one of the happiest times in some years. I felt more than the joy of battling for the country below me. I enjoyed again a feeling of residence in it. And I owed it to

Alford Roos, independent mine-owning “Mohammedan,” Scandinavian-American, American. Perhaps what made me happiest of all was the deep-seated knowledge that at that moment Alford Roos was just as happy as I. I had found a man willing to be engaged against the benighted. *He* had been “found out,” though buried in the confines of a museum-ranch house, a mile off the main road of a town of a thousand inhabitants, way off in the copper-laden hills of New Mexico. And he was happy to have been discovered. How many like him were stashed away in the America below me, in those endless prairies and villages and cities; individuals whose outraged national pride stuck in their gullets, but who did not know what to rally around?

IV

The New York documentary film workers now suggested postponement of the shooting until the following spring. Negotiations with the I.A.T.S.E. had slowed down. They could talk again. They offered as argument that we were already into the fall of the year and weather would be bad. I submitted weather reports that indicated the month of December in New Mexico to be without major precipitation, and January usually beautiful. I had a hunch they were talking political, not physical, climate. I insisted upon December. But a few days later I left New York with their agreement based on a compromise schedule of eight weeks and production to begin in January.

My colleagues received the news with gratitude. I had succeeded in spite of my previous doubts. When I said that my doubts still held, they smiled with pardonable reservations concerning my sportmanship.

And then, as on so many occasions—fireworks! Our collaboration was no bed of roses! No passive agreement directed at a boss to keep a job, and no fierce contest for personal advantage. Battles raged for the points at issue—but for them, not for us.

There was one thing we never argued about—what we were undertaking. It was one thing and we were one in seeking it. But as to a quality in the script, the achievement or failure of mood, or point in the direction of a scene, the battles were long, fierce and always resolved. Not on the ground that one or the other was the supreme authority, even in his particular field. But, if discussion did not bring agreement, then on the basis of a majority vote. It was difficult to take, at the beginning and, for that matter, also at the end. But we came to rely upon it, increasingly, as security for the end object, against our own individual weaknesses, even in the areas of our greatest individual strength. If we couldn't find one supporter, we swallowed our conviction and lived with and worked toward that of the majority.

And so it was in the matter of casting. I was outvoted. The company's decision was to use professional actors in the leading roles. It was necessary to go immediately to Mexico. We hoped that Rosaura

Revueltas would prove a proper choice. She was Mexican. She was a professional. I was also to find an actor to play Ramón, and then go directly to Silver City to cast the smaller roles and, finally, begin rehearsals.

After two days of work with Rosaura I signed her to a contract. I gave her a letter for presentation to the American Embassy in applying for a visa, stating that we had employed her. The visa was granted. Rosaura was Esperanza.

Rosaura Revueltas de Bodenstedt: A remarkable woman in an extraordinary household. She had had few years of schooling, having been born into the family of an impoverished small shopkeeper. Her mother, the daughter of a miner in northern Mexico, had borne many children. Of them, five had survived into adulthood. Rosaura's oldest brother had become Mexico's greatest composer, but had died at an early age. Her second brother had become one of the most gifted of the newer Mexican painters. He also died at an early age. Her only living brother was a leading novelist and screenwriter. Rosaura had played but three roles in the Mexican film industry but had won national awards for two of them. She spoke English, French, German and Italian, as well as her native Spanish—all self-taught. She was an accomplished dancer.

Her husband was German by birth. He had been a flyer in World War I. At its end, surfeited with German militarism and Emperor-worship, he left Germany. Speaking of his native land, his features firmed. "In Germany, everyone spoke of military courage. The German soldier was the most courageous in the world. But there was one thing that was lacking in Germany, always lacking—*civic* courage. Nobody spoke out. Not really. And without civic courage, what does a country have? Parades? Brass bands?"

He met Rosaura in Mexico when she was sixteen. They were married almost immediately. Now at thirty-five she had an eighteen year old son, six feet two, as lean as a birch and preparing to enter medical school. He and his father spoke all the languages Rosaura had taught herself and at table their conversation was, paragraph to paragraph, in one of five alternating tongues. Each chosen, one gathered, only to suit the precise mood to follow.

With Rosaura's help, an intensive search was initiated for an actor to play the leading role. The United States of America is large and powerful and Mexico is small and weak, and their borders meet. Our script honored people of Mexican cultural background; was an expression of their racial vigor, the Mexicans understood. But it was an insufficient solvent for their fear of the censorial attitude in the United States.

As I read with the few Mexican actors available to us, I came to appreciate that the Mexican-Americans of New Mexico were not Mexicans. They were a product of the struggle of their root culture and the struggle of their United States living. Dual struggle brought them dual strength and they needed it. They lived with their opponents—all the variegated partisans of inequality—face to face and day and night! Not one instant's surcease. The Mexicans, on the other hand, were a nation. They had sovereignty. No! Ramón, Mexican-American, was going to have to be found in the United States. Then, together with a Mexican actress, New Mexican miners' families, and blacklisted Hollywood film makers, we would begin a motion picture depicting the struggle for equality of a minority people in the United States—a struggle that succeeded.

Heading for Silver City, the road had begun to descend. The snow was changing into fog through which one could begin to see. I increased the car's speed. The houses on the outskirts of Silver City came into view.

It was now two years since prison—in a car driving toward Silver City. The long last night in jail indeed had ended. My liberty continued. And we were on our way to begin shooting a movie. No one had asked us to undertake this. It was our own idea. At least in part. Perhaps the largest part of every striving for liberty comes from outside oneself. From some indestructible popular intelligence or faith in it. It had nourished us for a year and a half. And in spite of the "times" behind us and around us, a final shooting script of "Salt of the Earth" was in our brief cases.

We dropped our bags at the lodge in Silver City and we drove another ten miles to Bayard. It was eight-thirty. The little town was dark and almost invisible in the unrelenting storm. The small

unpainted wooden building which was the union hall showed little light. I opened the door. We entered. A miner in his work clothes, the sergeant-at-arms, barred the way. His speech was pure Oklahoma. "This here's a union meetin'," he said. Before we could reply, one of the officers at the other end of the small room nodded to him. We were permitted to pass through and took seats. The miner who had stopped us came to my side. "Excuse me fer stoppin' you. But I got t'know who's comin' in'y here." I nodded. "They wuz expectin' you, huh? You must be them movie people? That's O.K. I didn't know, and that's my job: t'know. Yer mighty welcome." Many of the persons present turned and nodded or lifted a hand a little. We knew most of them. The ladies smiled, shyly.

The president of the union was speaking in Spanish—Ernest Velasquez, a man of thirty-five, with glasses, shirt open at the neck and wearing a leather jacket. His voice quiet, firm. His tone though casual was clearly studied in its intention to communicate.

Almost all of the eighty or ninety men and women present were Mexican-American. There were ashtrays on the benches. No one crushed his cigarette out on the floor. One would guess they had built the hall themselves. Rugged, calm, gentle faces. On previous visits we had studied them for hours, as if they were paintings in a gallery. They weren't. As militant trade unionists as this country had bred. A Catholic people. Every house with its shrine and holy pictures. An intelligent people. No soft soap went far with them.

And that was the trail over which we had walked, flown and skidded until, finally, Paul and I sat in this union hall of Local 890 in Bayard, New Mexico, in Grant County, waiting to address the members and announce that we had arrived to begin filming their lives, albeit without a leading actor.

That night the documentary union people in New York telephoned that they were not coming to New Mexico. I was not surprised. Brewer and the I.A.T.S.E. had delivered a knock-out blow through decent, frightened people.

Paul told us not to worry, we would have a crew—on time. Knowing Paul, I knew with what persuasive and infectious confidence in people he would proceed. He left for Los Angeles at once.

In one sense, this picture was more Paul's than anyone's. Not alone that he had found this reality and suggested it as a picture, but that in every moment of everyone else's despair his stubborn optimism, humor and scorn for difficulties became a parachute that went up instead of down. Often his seeming obliviousness of catastrophe would become infuriating. He would smile blandly and say, "We've got it made." And then turn up with the most unexpected people, products of his faith in them, who would also turn up with the most unexpected people out of their faith—and we were off again. There was no job too ungrateful for him, and even if he were covered up to his neck with muck, yanking a half-ton drilling rig through it by a string, he would be every inch a producer and bring dignity to the craft. Many of his cracks are unforgettable: when a reporter asked him one day if our film were in 3D (three dimensions), Paul blithely replied that ours was in 4D. The reporter, somewhat flabbergasted, asked, "What the hell does that have?" Paul replied, "Content."

If Paul said we'd have a crew, and on time, we'd have one. It would necessarily be tatterdemalion, but so was the army of the American revolution, and *it* won. I wired Rosaura that there might be a short delay, but asked that she sit tight. As Paul would have put it, "We had it made." All we needed was a crew, a leading male actor and Rosaura, our leading woman, safely across the United States border.

V

Of our crew, recruited by Paul, some came from New York, some from Chicago, some from Denver, some from Los Angeles. Some were past members of the studio unions who had been expelled for opposing Brewer. Some were present members of his union who would not be dictated to. Insisting that he had no right to deprive them of work, they joined us, even at the risk of their union cards. Some had never worked in motion pictures before, but came from the field of television. Some had never worked on a story film before. Two were members of the documentary union. They wished to work with us and came. Three were Negroes. Although the Hollywood unions were 100 per cent Jim Crow, we were free to choose our crew out of representative parts of the population.

Some came for two weeks, some for a month, some for the duration. Some came anonymously, some timorously, some under their own full names. Some came because they would have died to make this film, some because they could learn from a new experience, some for the job, some strictly for the money, some because—in spite of all our explanations—they didn't know what they were getting into.

Where were we to house thirty people of mixed composition in Silver City? My brother, Edward, and my sister-in-law, Sonja Dahl Biberman, who was also the secretary of our company, had been scouring the area in vain for days. There were no accommodations, anywhere, for a mixed company. The lodge in which we were staying was everything we could have wished for. It would accommodate thirty. This was off season and the lodge was unused except by us. Because it was the best lodging in the area and the scene of local dinner-parties, we doubted its availability and had not broached the matter. But it had become a last resort.

After dinner Sonja and I chatted at length with the proprietor. He was a handsome, quiet, out-of-doors Easterner who had retired to Silver City with his devoted wife and charming daughters after many years of employment in Ohio as an automotive engineer. We had enjoyed each other's company from the outset. My family had arrived

to spend part of the Christmas holiday season with me and, having the lodge to ourselves, we had moved somewhat beyond the relationship of host and guests. Now we were forced to essay a crucial foray—to win this castle as a home for our entire company. Our host was a man of erudition and of easily discernible conservative bent. We talked at length, seeking the most favorable entrance for our inquiry.

We drifted into discussing movies. He enjoyed them. I suggested that he would be interested in watching us make one. We were there for that purpose. We would have a company of about thirty men and women in Silver City for about two months. It had occurred to me that this might be a quite pleasant place for all of us to put up. We would take two meals a day in the lodge, breakfast and dinner. He gave me his rates. I computed the cost for thirty people for two months and the total sum was sizable. It was obviously a windfall for him at this time of year. He expressed his belief that they could make us very comfortable. We were welcome to use the large living room for our conferences and, in effect, take over the entire physical premises.

I casually disclosed that the members of our company would be Negro, Mexican-American and Caucasian. He replied without any pause, but rather carefully, that he was opposed to discrimination. He knew it was practiced fiercely in these parts, and there might be some repercussions, but he did not think, since we would be taking over the entire lodge, that it was his business to inquire into the race or color of our crew.

I felt we had it “made.” And I was all the more shocked when, in describing that we were shooting the film in association with the Mine, Mill union, his face showed sudden apprehension. He supposed I knew how people in the area regarded the union? He was not anti-union. He had belonged to a CIO union some years ago. And he was not even against this union. But he was aware of public sentiment, at least among his clientele. He didn’t wish to ruin his reputation in the area. Were we going to have people who refused to cooperate with Congressional committees too? And would we also invite leaders of the union to dinner occasionally? Would we have “meetings” there? He would have to think about this. It presented some very serious problems. Everything he had in the world was

invested in this lodge. It was a lifetime nest egg. He would have to discuss such a step with his wife. In these times the smallest rumor, utterly without substance, was enough to put a man beyond the pale. He would really have to dig into this question. I agreed that he must because if we came to terms I would have to have assurances that he would not change his mind in the midst of production.

Sonja and I wandered out into the fine night air and discussed our chances, and what, in heaven's name, we would do if he said no. We were not going to separate our crew and house those of color apart. Parceling thirty people out among the families of the miners was utterly impractical from many points of view, including such simple ones as transportation and efficiency. As we talked, the substance of a proper presentation occurred to me. We returned to the lodge and sought out the proprietor.

I expressed my sympathy for the difficulty of his choice. And yet, was it actually such a difficult one? It had occurred to me that he might like to know that a week ago Paul Jarrico had gone to the largest bank in Silver City and deposited fifty thousand dollars. It was banked by our company to the credit of an account to be known as the Mine, Mill and Smelter Union Special Motion Picture Account. Paul had informed the officer of the bank of the nature of the company and the purposes for which its money was to be used. The officer was cordial and solicitous. He requested that Paul inform him of any way in which he could be of any help. That same afternoon, I had made tentative purchases of thousands of dollars' worth of corrugated iron sheeting, lumber and assorted supplies. The businessmen had expressed interest, even fascination, and shown honest desire to serve us. Why should only big business have the unqualified right to make money? Why not he equally?

If he housed us, and anyone questioned his purpose, it seemed to me he had only to say that when the bank refused to take our money, and Kennecott refused to give Mine, Mill members employment, and the lumber companies withheld their lumber, he would join them by refusing us the use of his hostelry. And he might add, perhaps, that if he did refuse us prematurely, and we had no place to stay, we might withdraw our money from the bank and cancel our

order for the lumber and deprive the community of an opportunity of dividing fifty thousand dollars. As to whether we were socially suitable, did he propose to demand of everyone who entered, suitcase in hand, if he had ever incurred the displeasure of a Congressional committee? He was not required to do so. I suspected he would dislike it. And I doubted that any of his guests would appreciate it as a gratuitously imposed ritual. As to our guests and meetings in his living room, the lodge remained his property and if our conversation at any time offended his sense of propriety, he had only to tell us so. Actually, since the meetings would be discussions of shooting of the picture, he might be very interested in them and I cordially invited him to join us whenever they took place.

He promised to let me know his decision the next day. The following morning he apologized for his previous hesitation. The lodge was ours, come what may. I knew I did not have to write it into a contract. He was a conservative, independent American—when he thought about it.

Casting began now in earnest, and was divided into three main parts: securing a Ramón, casting the large number of Mexican-American parts, and finding Anglos for sheriff's deputies. The roles of the sheriff, the superintendent, the mine's eastern representative and the foreman were to be filled by blacklisted actors from Hollywood.

In the script Esperanza says that finding scabs in Zinc Town was like looking for a rich man in heaven. Finding Anglos in Silver City to play deputies in our Mine, Mill union film was almost impossible. The few Anglos who belonged to the union were desperately needed to play themselves. And they were older men. The deputies in Mike's script were a very special article. They were patterned on the real thing, and the real thing was a lanky, thin-nosed, young Anglo-Saxon with a drawl and no hips.

But our problem was not confined to Anglo actors. Now that it seemed we were beginning, stage fright seized many of the Mexican-American union members and their wives. Some approached me confidentially and asked if I truly knew what I was doing. They were not actors. They were not Hollywood people. How could they make a film that other people would enjoy? What did they have to offer?

Perhaps I was endowing them with qualities they did not have. I must not romanticize them. They were only working people. And burdened ones. Good people, yes, but very simple people. They liked us, and that was why they didn't wish us to make mistakes.

A minority was most enthusiastic and persuasive with others. This was going to be an adventure for the union and the union's friends from Hollywood. Together we would find a way. Clint Jencks and his wife, Virginia, were unqualified enthusiasts. And this meant a great deal among the union members, for their love for Clint was almost equally unqualified. He was one Anglo who had never let them down. More than that they knew that he respected them, loved them, believed in them. If he said they could do it, well!

There were problems of another kind. Husbands, they discovered, were going to have other men's wives as their wives in the film, and vice versa. That was a little awkward. They wished to know why they could not have their own wives as wives in the film. It was explained that each individual had characteristics and was cast for them and that casting was a very creative element in a film.

Whatever theoretical agreement we may have won was dissipated when we announced our final selection of the film's husbands and wives. We had coupled one man and one woman between whose real families there existed antipathies as deep and ancient as had separated the Montagues and Capulets of Verona. The man protested that his real wife would not tolerate this union. Even for the film it was unacceptable, intolerable, against nature. But his wife startled her husband by swiftly agreeing to our casting of him. No reason was offered nor asked for. It was all too evident that the wife believed that the family feud would act as a safeguard for her husband. The entire company would watch his scenes with infinitely more than customary interest, and thus effect a kind of chaperonage. Following this, the families changed mates without any further embarrassment. And as for the family feud, making a film dissolved it more swiftly than had all the bloodletting of Romeo and Juliet.

In the little town of Fierro, two miles from the Roos ranch, there was a dance hall. It was one of the two where Mexican-Americans could dance. And it was patronized exclusively by them. On Saturday

night every able-bodied man and woman, young and old, who could afford it, came to Fierro. I went to observe, as an aid in my casting. Three hundred couples danced, and the band played loudly, yet one could hold a conversation with one's neighbor without yelling. In all the time I was there, there was not ever a drunk in that hall. If a man came with his wife, he danced mostly with her. If a man came with a young lady friend, he danced mostly with her. Tables surrounded the dance area and between dances they were filled with the dancers, who ordered drinks and talked.

Everyone dressed up for the evening. The women wore lovely frocks, some of them homemade. Men and women alike were graceful. Many of the women were ravishingly beautiful.

Mrs. Molano came, whom Mike transposed bodily into the character of Mrs. Salazar in the film. She was fifty-five, had iron-gray hair and was married to a miner who was ill with silicosis, of which her first husband had died. She was hearty, proud of her people, a sinew of the union. During the women's tenure on the picket line, she rose every morning at four. Finishing her household chores by five, she would begin knocking on the doors of the other houses, rousing the women within for picket duty. And when they would cry out to her, "Mrs. Molano, why are you up so early? You will get sick!" she would reply that she was up and moving at five to prove to them they could be on the picket line at six.

There was nothing we needed that Mrs. Molano was not certain we could get, because she meant to see to it herself. She was pleased that the film was going to be made. She thought these were fine working men and women and that one could profit from coming to know them. And one day, when I was rather beaten with problems, she came to me and said, "When you feel discouraged in your life afterwards, you come to us. We will always give you courage. Because we always have our backs against the walls, we have never a way to go but forward. We cannot afford to be downhearted. You will see. We will finish the picture."

And there was Mrs. Ramirez, who had been the picket captain of the women's line. The union and the auxiliary had planned a dinner in honor of the women on the first anniversary of that momentous event.

At a meeting to organize the dinner the president of the union had said they would require many committees and first of all a food committee—and what lady would volunteer to head that committee? Mrs. Ramirez rose and, addressing the chair, asked if the celebration were to honor the women? Of course! Then she believed the chair should ask what *brother* would volunteer to head the food committee because, personally, she expected to *sit* all through the celebration and be honored! And she was. The evening of the dinner the men were at the tables serving the food and cutting the hams and sweeping the floors. And they did so because they wished to. They were honoring their women because when the chips were down these women had been saviors of the union and of its gains for their families.

And Floyd Bostick, southern Anglo, looked at them with wet eyes and said, “By God, I’d die fer those women, ‘n’d think nothin’ of it.”

And Adolfo Barela, tall, massive, young, handsome, well-spoken, college-bred, said, “I tried leaving here and going out into the country when I came out of the army. But I’m Mexican-American and I didn’t get far—and I missed my people. My father was dying of silicosis and I knew that if I came back I’d probably end as he was ending. But then it occurred to me that maybe we could see to it than no one died of silicosis. They were my people and if I could do anything for them, I wanted to. So I went back into the mines. It gave me such a boot during the strike to throw the Anglos’ stereotype of us right back into their teeth. Sometimes we can use it to our own advantage. I was out trying to build support for the strike among the Anglo workers. And whenever any of the deputies would catch me where they didn’t want me to be, they’d shove me up against a wall and ask who I was and what I was doing. And I’d shrug my shoulders the way those Hollywood directors make Mexicans shrug their shoulders and say ‘*No sabe, nada.*’ And they’d let me pass. And then I’d get a little sick to my stomach thinking what power ignorance has when it can wear two pistols over its thin hips. And later, when I saw what these women were doing, these women of ours, I was glad I was here, glad I’d come back. They made a man proud of what he came from.”

Their sturdy pride showed in Joe T. Morales, giant, Indian, father of six great sturdy sons, who came to me and said, “If you don’t

mind—in that scene where the foreman calls Ramón a ‘dirty greaser’—I’d take that word out. Because somewhere, if somebody saw the film, they might get the idea that people could come here and call us names like that. And that would be too bad because somebody might get killed. We have no ill-will for anyone but we’ve passed the point where we stand still for insult. Why don’t you show the foreman about to say it—and stopped before the word is out! Then people will understand.” We did just that.

Sometimes a casting problem was solved by pure luck. One day in the union hall an Anglo walked in to talk to Clint Jencks. When I saw him, my hope became almost physical. There was the deputy Vance, in the flesh! Tall, angular, blond, the twang, the narrow hips, everything. While he was talking to Clint I made signals with my hand indicating that I had to meet him. I discovered that his name was Rockwell and he was no deputy. He too was a miner. And a union man, although, because of the nature of his work, he was not a member of this union. When I had told him of our need of him in the film, he said quietly, “I’d shore like to do it and git my licks into them mine owners for what they done to these people. I’d shore like to pay my respect to those womenfolk of these people here. They deserve anything a man could offer. These are shore great people.”

He took the script, came back next day and said he shore would like to do it but it called for him to beat up one of the union men. He couldn’t beat up a union man the way the script called for because he—well, he just couldn’t do it, that’s all. But it had to be done by someone, I explained, or there wouldn’t be a picture, and wasn’t it better to have it done by a friend? He said that shore sounded reasonable and he’d think it over. The next day he came back and asked did I know that he just wouldn’t be able to live in this town if he played a mean Anglo—those mean Anglos would lay for him until they got him—they were so mean. But even so he’d do it—but in the script he had to haul off and hit Ramón. And he didn’t want to do that because he’d not like to have it on his conscience if he really hit him the way the script described it. He shore wouldn’t like to have that on his conscience.

I assured him there were techniques for delivering blows. He would only barely touch Ramón yet the effect of it would be there. He

said he'd have to be awful sure it was foolproof. I asked him to come back the following evening. We would be holding a group rehearsal and I would give him the proof. I went back to the lodge and practised, because in all my years in films I had never directed such a scene. In Hollywood such scenes were turned over to trained stunt-men. I knew I had to have a theory so I invented one which seemed plausible. After study I concluded that in the delivery of the blow one went from relaxation through energy to relaxation so that at the moment of striking, one's arm, hand and fist, were again completely relaxed. Lining up pillows, suitcases and chairs, I practised and practised until, whether the theory was any good or not, the practical application worked perfectly.

Then I found a brother in the union to whom I showed the technique of reacting—the turns of the head, the slump of the body and the grunts—still all theory. That evening the Anglo miner arrived, but not alone. He brought his brother. A replica of himself. He brought his brother along, he said, because he just wanted him to see this thing. There were now two Anglos available to us, if our performance earned them. And we performed. It worked like a charm. Everyone applauded wildly. Then I revealed the secret and asked the Anglo skeptic to try it, and not to fear to give it all he had. He did and he was magnificent! The tiny ball rang with cheers, while both he and his brother signed for the film. Naturally they brought their wives and children too. Great day! Our Anglo problem was solved. Because these were the important roles and with the Rockwell brothers with us we found the few other Anglos we needed. The brothers and sisters of the local said, "The movie brings us friends."

When the picture was over the Rockwell brothers did leave the Silver City area. Rocky had been right. It had become too hot for them. They piled their families into their truck and took off for parts north. But they had paid their tribute to a people they respected, and had left, on film, two performances which professionals may study with profit. And they did so not for any reckonable profit, but for love of a fighting people.

VI

Early in January Rosaura crossed the border of the United States at Juarez-El Paso and flew into Silver City. She was met at the airport by a delegation from the union auxiliary. Mrs. Molano presented Rosaura with a bouquet of flowers, welcomed her, and expressed the union's pleasure in having a distinguished Mexican artist join them. Suddenly we were almost a going operation. All that remained was to find a Ramón.

Paul had returned from Los Angeles. The crew was scheduled for intermittent arrival according to the need for various of the technical departments. The negative film had arrived. Arrangements had been made for processing our film at the Pathé Laboratories in Hollywood. Paul arranged for a theatre in Bayard to run our rushes each day.

With Sonja's assistance the organization of the union, by the production committee, began. Eight members of the union and auxiliary and seven members of our company and staff. The committee was so organized that in the event of any dispute it was guaranteed that the union could outvote the company. The production committee, by mutual consent, was assigned absolute authority over all aspects of the filming including the content of each scene. This was not a union demand. It was our company's demand. Its purpose was to insure that the finished film, to the limit of our ability to achieve it, would represent their point of view—truth as they understood it—a picture of life as it looked from where they stood. Because every precaution was taken to ensure this result, obviously no such division—vote was ever necessary.

Paul, Sonja, Ernie and Braulia Velasquez, Eva and Cente Becerra, Adolfo Barela and Virginia Jencks, union men and women, organized committees in every small surrounding community, to gather the people necessary for the day's shooting, baby-sitters to care for the children of those women on the set, miners to alert those working in the various mine properties, crews for construction.

After eight hours in the mines, whether on the day, night or graveyard shift, the men required came to the Roos ranch to erect the mine-shaft and adjacent buildings, or to the Fierro dance hall, where the interiors were being built under the supervision of technicians from the Holly-

wood studios. And everything they did was done with never-ending quiet, never-varying modesty.

One evening, at the construction site on the Roos ranch, some twenty miners were piecing together the skeleton of the mine shaft by moonlight. Since it was necessary for me as their director to understand these stalwart people I questioned one of them about their unfailing humility. Was it only the customary modesty of working people? Yes. With a little something added. This was a people living surrounded by "superiors," he explained. A loud laugh, a gusty conversation, an exuberant party, brought the Anglos down upon them for disturbing the peace. Through insults, beatings and jailings, they had learned long ago that their enjoyment of each other had many limits, included among which was a limitation on volume. But the quieter the tone of voice, he added, the more you put into it.

Then I understood better something that had happened the last evening Gale had been in Bayard. We had read the screenplay to the members of the union and their families. At its conclusion we received modest applause, which to our ears spelled flop. Beads of perspiration gathered on our foreheads as we sauntered down from the platform. Turning to the first group we passed I asked for an expression of opinion. "It was—*perty* good," came the reply. The beads grew larger and more numerous. To a second and third group the same question and from each the same answer. "It was —*perty* good."

Across the room I saw Vincente Becerra. He was an outspoken, frank soul; a young man with real enthusiasm. From him we would receive the low-down. We strode across the hall, I seized him by the shoulders and demanded, "Cente, for God's sake, tell me!" His head nodded slowly, keeping time with his calculated speech. "Well, Herbert, it was *perty* good." My lower lip fell against my chin. But he had not finished. His head continued to nod slowly and then he added reflectively, "You know, I think that was about the best thing I ever heard in my life."

The following day, at the formal union meeting which was to discuss the reading and pass on the script for production, I made a new kind of speech. And I received a new kind of response.

"Brothers, we have come to know each other, *a little*. I know *some* of the things in your lives that you would like to have many people know.

And we Hollywood people have some things we would like known. We are not so far apart as some people would like to keep us. If you'd like what you heard last night told to the people of the country who don't know you—so they can know you are their friends—I think they and you and we will all profit. That's all culture is—people talking to each other—finding out about each other. It may not seem like much, but it's a lot. And you're part of it, if you wish to be. The decision is up to you."

A miner rose and called out vigorously, "Brother Chairman, I move we make the movie." A stirring round of applause almost drowned out the seconding. The reading of the script *had* been a flop from which we learned a great deal. Our job was not to bring courage to them, but to photograph theirs.

There remained only Ramón. I had scuttled from one end of Grant County to another. I had read with dozens of members. I had followed the hunch of anyone who had one. "There's a brother who lives in a canyon north of Santa Rita." "What about so and so, he's a good union brother." I explained that it took more than a good union man, although that too was necessary. It required more than a good speaker, although that might help. The part needed a man with control, yet a deep feeling and a desire to have that feeling represent—out of himself—all of them. They knew what I meant, but they didn't know just the man. They were not actors; they had warned me.

I knew that I was growing panicky. Ramón was not all there in the script. The necessities were there, but characterization would come only if the script was largely filled out in performance—in damned good performance. Ramón was not the hero in the ascendant, structural sense that Esperanza was the heroine. But the whole inside of the story swung around him. Played literally, the role would lose the powerful dissatisfactions which drove him, his deeply hidden adoration of his family, his knowledgeable, demoniacal defense of the union and his great concomitant capacity for gaiety. He was complex in mood and motivation. He was long history. His growth was the theme vindicated. Had I come a cropper this time? Had I taken on a too impossible creative task in relation to a non-professional?

Rosaura and Sonja had asked me several times to read with Juan Chacon, the newly elected president of the local. I had shaken my head

vigorously. Johnny was much too shy, too small in stature, too sweet and retiring for Ramón. Ramón was—and I was off again. I had found one man in the Miembras area who was far and away the most promising physically. But he had too small a voice for Ramón. But...

I pointed him out to Rosaura and Sonja and their only reply was to ask why I did not read with Johnny. I was beginning to become annoyed. I had been casting all my adult life. There were certain attributes for a role! I asked them to come to the hall the following day and I would read with the Miembras brother. I wished very much to have them hear him. They asked if I would not, please, give a script to Johnny and have him read after the brother from the Miembras. Somewhat sullenly and protesting that this was not the time to burden me, I agreed.

The next afternoon before the reading, I asked Rosaura and Sonja—if they liked the Miembras man and saw possibilities in him, as I was certain they would—to clear their throats gently when he had finished. That would be a signal to me and I would make appointments with him for rehearsals because we simply had to begin work on the Esperanza-Ramón scenes.

The reading over, I waited for the throat clearing. It didn't come. I was annoyed but I was also relieved. He was not Ramón—no one knew that better than I. I thanked him and we waited for Johnny. Not a word was said between us. They felt my gloom and did not add to it. Johnny came. He read. His reading was utterly pedestrian. He was ill-at-ease, as well he might have been. But the clearing of throats which followed resembled an orchestra tuning up. I told Johnny that he had been selected by the ladies for the role. Johnny fell two steps backward and said, very honestly, "Oh, my God!" My own feeling exactly.

And that was how we cast Ramón.

The following day Johnny came to the lodge and he and Rosaura and I began to read together, to discuss the character in the context of actual scenes. One had to be careful not to urge too many concepts at one time. I had three weeks in which to help him turn himself inside out. Every atom of the buried experience and feeling of himself as an individual and as a part of his people had to be realized. We had to find the general in the specific, rather than the specific in the general. Technique, interpretation

and transformation had to be discovered as interrelated aspects of a single development. But there were other hurdles; perhaps insoluble ones.

After three hours of intensive study of him, I was frightened out of my wits. Johnny had two ingrained mannerisms which were impossible to cope with. At the end of each sentence, and sometimes at the end of each phrase, he licked his lips. He obviously did not know it. Also, when he listened to someone speaking, he repeated the speaker's words with him, his lips moving silently, his head bobbing slightly. He was obviously not aware of this either. Reference to these habits accomplished nothing.

When lunch was over, I asked Johnny to walk out to the veranda of the lodge with me, alone. I undertook a drastic solution of the problem. The cure couldn't wait. It had to come quickly or fail. I told him that he had two very serious shortcomings. I described them. They had to be eliminated swiftly or it would be impossible for him to play this role. I asked him if there would be any point in my telling him so if I did not believe they could be eliminated. Obviously not! I had had other similar experiences. I knew how to help him. Because of that I could be blunt and direct in describing the problem.

"Johnny, in the movies we don't need your mouth or your lips." Later on this afternoon I would like you to throw them away, but completely. The only things we need in you are your eyes. Every last bit of your whole being's concentration is in your eyes. You remember with them, think with them, love with them, fight with them. And in order that there be no possibility of doing anything with anything but your eyes I want you to throw away your mouth and your lips, and your ears too.

"Now, one other thing. When you leave me in a little while, I would like you to go to the top of that mountain behind us. I want you to stay there for several hours. I'd like you to spread your legs, get a good, comfortable stance, and remember everything that has taken place in the valleys below you for three hundred years. And everything you remember I want you to see. Is that clear, Johnny? Not just remember it in your brain, but see it in your eyes. And everything you see I'd like you to feel yourself in the middle of. See yourself right square in the middle of it, with your eyes! And as you stand there, seeing yourself, seeing this country, seeing its history, seeing its struggles, seeing its strength and promise, I want you to talk back at it, and with *words*, spoken by your eyes. Not looks, remem-

ber, but words and sentences and deep feelings, pledges, *spoken with your eyes*. If you do this you'll come back tomorrow no longer John Chacon. Not even Ramón. But the vital spark of the people of this valley out of which we will make Ramón. And also it will be raw material that has been cameraized; that thinks and feels and lives and talks in such a way that the people who look at you can think and feel and live and talk with you—in your eyes. Okay, Johnny?"

He nodded his head and left, without words. A very important beginning! I watched him cut around the lodge and make for the foothills to the mountain behind. I went up to see Rosaura. I was somewhat self-conscious before her. After all she was a professional, and I was concerned lest the morning's work had been very discouraging to her. What I had forgotten was that she was an Indian, and Johnny was an Indian, and this was not an "engagement" for them. They had not taken on this task provisionally. They were confident of making it. I was not nearly so certain. I couldn't eat and I couldn't sleep. All I could feel was Johnny on that mountain top, and the necessarily brusque way I had sent him there and the loneliness of it for him and the terrible burden he had had thrown upon him.

At nine-thirty the next morning we began to read—that is, Rosaura began to read. Johnny's eyes fastened upon her as if she were the whole, vast terrain of Grant County—and his lips were gone. They no longer moved as she spoke. When his responses came his eyes were fastened upon her and the words were secondary, his tongue did not once lick his lips—and never did again in all the time we rehearsed or shot film.

Each day the chunks we digested became larger, until we rose from our chairs and began to read while moving through the roles. And then it was all gone again—all of it! It was like starting all over. But this time it was not frightening. Before Johnny was only another step of growth. And he went up to the mountain, this time script in hand, with instructions to play his role walking. And he walked it and walked it until his feet also belonged to his eyes and moved with and toward what he saw—and then progress became fantastic. The chunks were now the size of boulders.

The script never left his hands. He studied when he got up and when he sat down and when he ate and when he slept. He studied for all the people of his culture and of his social order to whom expression had been

denied. This was not playing himself only; this was art, creation; the representation of a culture in an individual. A torrent of impulses, some conscious, some instinctive, emerged from him as emotion, as expression, as truth, as art. He developed a pedagogical approach to his artistry which I had never observed in an actor before. When a scene was finished in its shooting, he would go off alone and work. But not upon the next scene. Upon the one finished. As if now chewing it to shreds, to drain the last bit of masticatable marrow from its bones, tasting the accomplishment as foundation for the next. And scene after scene drew rounds of applause from crew and the Hollywood members of the cast. The union men and women came to me and asked, "Johnny is perty good, eh?" They did not know jealousy. They believed more in themselves because of him.

In the intense cold of the last days of filming indoors, the cameras froze and for days we lost time. When we began again, in order to make up this valuable, costly time, I undertook to shoot the long climax scene between Rosaura and Johnny quickly. I rehearsed it throughout. For Johnny it was a most complex scene, filled with the minutiae of business which had to be timed with absolute exactness so that it would match the subsequent closer shots. I had determined to shoot the entire scene at middle distance. And did. Then I realized what I had done.

No actor could remember all that business for later shots. I recalled one piece of it in which Ramón inserted a bullet into the chamber of his rifle. The actual sound punctuated the scene magnificently and I knew it might take twenty tries to get that again. But, gambling, I decided to take the new angle and later shoot many cut-away scenes so that in assembling the film I could cover up the inevitable mismatches. We began. Every tiny thing he had done before, even the beautiful timing of the cartridge into the chamber, was there again. And later, in the long months of cutting the film, mismatches were a problem, but not with Johnny. Never once did we have to cut away from him. And the likelihood is that he may never make another film, artist that he is, because he is Mexican-American, because he belongs to a militant union with a record of battling too hard, too long, and because he made the mistake of discovering his great talent with us—dangerous people with whom to associate.

After months of cutting and attempting to exhibit the film, after having seen it perhaps five hundred times, I never ceased to stand in awe of

the technical, human and artistic magnificence of so many of these “non-professionals”: Henrietta Williams, in so many scenes; arising to ask that the women be permitted to take over the picket lines; her reading of the line, “These changes come with pain”; the frosty morning when the women’s picket line had dwindled to a mere thimbleful. I will remember their unsuspected artistry for its proof of the unimaginable sum of untapped human beauty which exists in people.

Nor did we have to wait so long for the rewards of their capacities. The filming presented a surfeit of problems, but they were all possible of creative solution. We lacked many elements of Hollywood production and we missed them. Our equipment was second rate; it was all we could obtain in Hollywood. Our crew was inexperienced in many departments—and there were many departments missing altogether. We had no script clerk. Without a skilled one, a production is lost. In the trained memory and notebook of this individual is every atom of information concerning what has been shot—what is missing—and of the relationship of people, things, angles, lenses, locations, etc. We trained the wife of one of the members of the crew and she worked eight hours and studied eight hours of each day.

We had no assistant director. For weeks I had to function in this capacity as well. Finally, one of the actors doubled in brass. We had no full-time wardrobe department. We had no full-time wardrobe man. Our transportation department was inadequate and many days we did not begin shooting until almost noon because somehow the actors had not been gathered and the cars and trucks had to begin their tortuous rounds at ten o’clock to fetch those we discovered to be still missing. These were some of the things we did not have.

But what did we have? We had a people before the camera, and men and women who loved them behind it. We had three Negro crew members who were at long last fulfilling a dream—they were engaged in making a motion picture, and fighting to learn how against a more equitable future for Negroes. One of the Negroes, the assistant cameraman, was also the still photographer and the visiting trumpet player in the orchestra at the Fierro Dance Hall on Saturday night. We had a blacklisted head-grip formerly at Paramount Studios for fifteen years, who was a splendid

teacher of his craft. Carpenters were graduating on all sides of him after an intensive four-hour course under his tutelage.

At the end of the day shift, lines of miners climbed onto unfinished sets, stole a few moments for rehearsal between chores, or watched the designer—a painter from Hollywood, blacklisted—pull a puppet from his box and give an interlude performance of which they never tired: a senator inveighing against the *out-ra-geous* people making that *out-ra-geous* film, *Salt of the Earth*.

And all day, every day—the women! They saw to it that we were never without a dozen of their number, just in case. To act as technical advisers, to leap into any scene that required background people, to provide audience and encouragement, to mother and wive the production, to hold our hands in their hands and our eyes with theirs and keep our courage high when our thin, middle-class patience showed holes. Mrs. Chavez, Mrs. Flores, Mrs. Espinosa, Mrs. Iguado. And interlaced among them, our women-actresses: the serious, gay, true and beautiful artists: Angy, Clorinda, Henrietta and Virginia.

Generous, patient, but fiercely proud. Prudent, jealous of what was theirs and scrupulously tidy. I never felt any need to limit an artistic goal for them, men, women or children. They understood because their culture was a rising curve. And they were no pushovers in the matter of aesthetic judgment.

One such problem momentarily assumed sizable proportions. The sheriff and his assistants, in the real struggle, were ignorant, vicious toadies, and, realistically portrayed, would have demanded a stretching of the imagination of the most willing to believe in human animality. It was our desire to generalize these minions of the law in isolated mining communities. The men and women who had known the real article in life and bore mementos of them in vivid scars feared that we were too greatly minimizing reality. They feared the miners and their wives would appear aggressive against little provocation. We explained that our purpose in this story was not to expose villains but to dramatize protagonists. Enough that the villains were representatives of distant operators, doing a job, sometimes without relish. And, in the persons of the most backward, with a kind of sporting pleasure which was more believable, and in a sense more fiendish, than blatant brutality. We found agreement and approach.

In shooting the scene at the mine head, in which the foreman and Ramón tangle and the strike is declared, the compromise proved to be a realistic synthesis of all the factors involved. Both the miners and the Anglo actors from Hollywood who played the company representatives were so carried away with the verisimilitude they created for each other, that I allowed the scene to play on for some six hundred feet. It grew and mounted in dramatic tension with that exciting extra quality a scene takes on when the actors have forgotten who and where they are. I was directing the scene from the roof of a low building and, in my own excitement, almost fell off it. When the scene was concluded I leaped down and physically hugged all the participants, only to discover that the cameraman, unprepared for a scene of such duration, had run out of film after three hundred feet. But that three hundred feet was enough. For as many takes thereafter as I wished they recaptured the realities previously so deeply felt and transmitted. The miners congratulated the actors on having "made them so mad!" And the actors thanked the miners for having been, as one of the actors put it, "like a magnificent drummer in a jazz band, beating the trumpet up and up until..."

But that evening at the union hall, Paul Jarrico and Sylvia, his wife, who was visiting us for a few days, were present during a discussion among the miners. Several officers of the union were critical of the treatment by the Mexican-American union members of the Anglo actors who played the anti-union roles in the film. The realism of the scenes, they explained, had made some of the miners who had participated in the real scenes hark back to them and carry their emotions into the periods between filming. That was disrespectful. The members must understand that this was a film, a work of art. They must respect it, and all who participated in it. That especially included Anglos, whether from Hollywood or Silver City, who were playing the roles of opponents of the union. To them no remarks must be addressed, such as had been made to their counterparts in real life. Not even as a joke!

After the meeting Cente Becerra asked Sylvia why she could not stay on for the entire production. They were always pleased to make new Anglo friends and believed her prolonged stay would profit her and them.

The men gathered to talk about the crew that had come from Hollywood. The Negro and the Anglo people of the crew worked so well

together that the miners had thought they had been working side by side for many years.

The spirit of the set penetrated swiftly into the community. The lingo of motion picture making even established itself in Mary Lou Castillo, aged five, who played Estella, Esperanza's daughter, and who had christened me "El Biberman." On the Roos ranch one morning, when the wind was blowing six-inch rocks up hill and everything on the set was battened down to prevent its being swept away, Mary Lou had asked Sylvia Jarrico to accompany her to the privy which had been erected on the location. Once she was inside, her panties lowered and seated upon the wooden board, she turned her head toward the violent whistlings of the rampant wind outside and shouted at it, "Quiet, for a take!"

The most persistent problem was the most simple. The miners, even those who spoke English better than Spanish, retained a rhythm of accenting words which was of the Spanish rather than English. Many colloquial Americanisms lost their flavor because the accent was on the verb instead of the noun or adverb. Johnny could not protest: "Work *alone*," so that its meaning came through. He would accent "work" rather than "alone" and often an hour would be spent helping him get it. And the set would ring with dozens of people saying it for him until the simple two-word phrase intoned around the location was like a mystic chorus. But once he got it, like everything Johnny "got," it was there for keeps.

But the most pressing decision upon me had been the style of shooting. It was obvious that the use of dollies and intricate moving camera shots was precluded. We did not have the manpower or a wide enough skill in the use of the equipment we had. But one could not shoot negatively. One had to feel creative possibilities within the areas of technical approach determined upon. If one did not use a fluid camera, the stationary camera had to have an orientation.

I began to look at the work of Mexican painters and engravers for clues of composition which might stimulate ardor for an arrested camera. One evening, before the beginning of shooting, I was examining a folio of Rivera's murals, when I recalled an evening spent with him twenty years before in New York. A group of theater people had gathered to meet him and someone had asked him how he could paint for multi-millionaires; did not the limitations they imposed cripple him? He reacted to this ques-

tion with a kind of shock as if the questioner were artistically illiterate. He replied that all artists work under limitations, of many kinds. The very concept of unlimited freedom was non-existent, absurd. Limitations were the first command upon artists. Only when the artist knew what were his limitations was he free to work. I had been as cynical of his reply as others that evening. But as I remembered it, I began to discover its extraordinary application to our problems. We were making a film of a gentle people. Their rhythms had to be preserved. If I pushed them too hard for speed of delivery, their actual quality would be falsified. And yet their own normal speed of delivery and reaction was too slow for the screen. The screen, a magnifying instrument, demanded a greater-than-life pace to keep it from lagging behind the speed at which an audience could assimilate. Then it occurred to me that if I were to shoot many distances of the various scenes and pretty much from the same angle we could cut straight in upon scenes and straight out of them. By rapid cutting I would be able to eliminate interstices of pause and thus speed the pace of the film with pieces which yet retained the normal speed of the real people. Because there were no changed angles, the audience would not have a sensation of abruptness and of being yanked about. It would permit, in this direct approach to scenes, the use of jumps from very close to very full shots, for emphasis. And I could vary my approaches in terms of low and high shots rather than changed angle, remaining within this very simple set of limitations. As I began to enjoy the prospect of such use of the camera I ended by thanking my stars for my limitations. Had I used a mobile camera, I would have had infinitely less potential for frequent cutting. Because of the camera movement, the cinematographic speed I could now obtain would have been impossible. I would have had to choose between artificial and damaging acceleration of the actors or surrender of the pace itself.

The overall advantage of my accepted limitations would be a film in which the camera work was unobtrusive and the scenes were more in the visual tonality of the realistic story we were photographing. Limitations, properly understood, were indeed a first creative step. In this instance they evolved a style which, as I reviewed it later, was most singularly fortunate for this particular subject.

VII

The film's production became a leaven in the countryside. Within a few weeks a change began to creep over the entire community. The proprietor of the lodge had indeed received a few weak challenges. But they dwindled off and were not renewed. The body of men and women in the crew and staff, and the miners and their families, began to win new respect in the community. And not for themselves alone. Also for their union and for us, their friends, who were now widely known as Hollywood expatriates, unfriendly to the Un-American Activities Committee and, in my case, a jailbird. All shared the spreading warmth. Little by little we began to be accepted for ourselves. The local newspaper's unconcealed barbs fell on barren ground. Perhaps the greatest compliment to the entire community, Mexican-American and Anglo, came when Will Geer, who played the role of the sheriff, was invited to address the Horticultural Club of Silver City. The star of many Broadway shows, a featured and highly respected character actor in innumerable Hollywood films, he had, after being blacklisted, opened a nursery in Topanga Cnyon.

He was something of a scholar on the subject and the invitation to him was an acknowledgement of that fact, as it was an acknowledgement of our acceptance by the Anglo ladies of Silver City. After his speech, the president of the club, a leading socialite of the community, suggested to Will that she would be pleased to invite some of the ladies of the union auxiliary to luncheon to discuss their cooperation in beautifying the area. Perhaps a program of gardens could be developed. She thought it high time all the ladies of the community came to know each other.

One Sunday, when we required a large picket line of men, I was startled and delighted to see in the camera finder as I checked the scene the figure of our lodge's proprietor moving in the line along with the miners. Several other Anglo-Americans from the community were there to observe and participate in this increasingly popular project.

When we required a church for exterior and interior shooting, we visited the priest of the Catholic Church in Hanover. He was cordial, interested and in every way helpful. "The church doors are never

locked. Enter whenever you wish and be at home." He instructed the actor who played the priest in the christening scene, gave him the necessary robes and acted as technical advisor in the shooting. The Dean of the cathedral in Silver City made the parochial school playground available to us for another scene. And he, a militant Irishman, became a frequent visitor to our locations and between us a friendship developed. He was a well-read man, and since I had long possessed a deep affinity for Irish literature and speech and history, we found wide grounds upon which to range in our talks. A saloon keeper of Central, the chief politician there, and the ranking Mexican-American politician of Silver City became acquaintances upon whom we called for assistance and from whom we received it in full measure.

For three weeks we tasted America: A land of people making up their own minds, finding much to admire in each other without fearing their own judgments and confidences. It was a promising country. It contained all the necessary elements to make it again the light of the world. It was capable of healing old wounds, of discovering the external bias which had inflicted them, and of laying foundations of understanding to prevent their recurrence. Life in that America was increasingly pleasurable, rewarding and profitable. For three full weeks a neighborly, democratic way of life began to shine through a community of many cultures, races, classes and conditions of living. The community was moving toward peace and security. It was actually on the verge of becoming a community.

And for that sin it was punished!

The denouement came slowly, and somewhat absurdly. One day we read that Walter Pidgeon, president of the Screen Actors Guild in Hollywood, had received a letter from an Anglo lady, resident in Silver City, "revealing" the presence in Silver City of a "Red" motion picture company. She asked Mr. Pidgeon how the unsuspecting Mexican-Americans could be rescued from seduction into the Communists' filmic toils. The modernistic superiority of this good lady was not wasted upon the miners and their families. Nor was Mr. Pidgeon's immediate "revelation," in return, that we had nothing to do with the motion picture industry and that he was referring the matter to higher authorities. So far it was amusing and routine.

But on its heels came a column of Victor Riesel. This lifted the Pidgeon item into the journalistic stratosphere. He nominated Mr. Pidgeon for an Oscar for "discovering how Red is a valley not too far from the Los Alamos atomic proving grounds." "When you try to hide secret weapons," said Mr. Riesel, "you find concentrations of Communists." Paul Jarrico, he reported, had imported two carloads of Negroes [we had three Negro crew-members, breaking the Hollywood lily-white crew pattern] and deployed them for their first shooting, a sequence which starts with mob violence against them. And, soon, he continued, some four hundred Americans of Mexican descent were being skillfully handled by Herbert Biberman and Gale Sondergaard [who, with our children, had actually been in Los Angeles since leaving Silver City seven weeks before after a brief visit with me at Christmas time].

The following day two singular statements were made in Hollywood. In an interview in the Hollywood Reporter I.A.T.S.E. president Roy M. Brewer, chairman of the Hollywood AF of L Film Council, said, *"Hollywood has gotten rid of these people and we want the government agencies to investigate carefully."*

The second statement was made by the Motion Picture Industry Council, to which belonged the producers, the talent guilds and the unions—organized for the purpose of coordinating industry-wide black-listing efforts—euphemistically known as the "clearance" program. This statement was signed by Steve Broidy, president of the council and of Monogram Pictures:

"None of the motion picture companies represented in the MPIC has any connection, whatsoever, with this picture or the organization of individuals making it. The studios and groups composing the MPIC membership do not recognize this operation or its product as reflecting their own views, interests, or policies."

Never, in its entire history had such a declaration of outlawry been issued against any film by the motion picture industry.

The following day the *Silver City Press* stated that a member of MPIC was in Silver City to "investigate" the film. Then came a two-column, page one editorial carrying the title, "It's Time to Choose Sides." Despite this invitation to "action," the communities of Bayard, Hanover, Central and Silver City remained unprovoked. But the unruffled sensibilities of

the people of these communities were to be subjected to more rigorous experiences.

After the day's shooting, on February 23rd, I arrived at the lodge one evening to find two immigration men waiting. They asked to see Rosaura. I asked the reason and was told that it was a routine check on her papers. Rosaura had not yet returned from the set. I asked them to wait. Having driven from El Paso in a fairly high, snowy wind, they were chilled. I asked if they would accept some whisky. After the second drink Rosaura arrived. We adjourned to her room and the gentlemen questioned her about her crossing of the border. Everything seemed in order. They asked for her papers. She gave them. They scrutinized them meticulously and asked why the passport did not bear a stamp. Rosaura said she could not answer that question.

She described the scene of crossing the border. She had flown to Juarez in a Lamsa plane. There she and a large group of young girls bound for a Catholic school in the United States—her only co-passengers in the plane—had been escorted to a Lamsa limousine. They had driven to the United States border, where the limousine stopped. An immigration officer approached the car. He asked them to take out their papers and extend them through the window of the car. He passed by, examined each one cursorily and waved them across the border.

The immigration men asked her to describe the man. She did. She also described the driver and even the porter who had taken their bags from the plane to the car. The inspectors recognized them. They had another drink and asked if they could have her papers. She turned to me for advice. I suggested that the officers had a right to them and that she surrender them. As the men left one of them stopped in the hall and repeated his previous statement, that this was only a routine matter, not to worry about it, nobody wished to hurt anyone. The papers would be returned after they had been seen by the chief.

They left.

The following day word came to the set that Congressman Donald L. Jackson of California was speaking on the floor of the Congress, attacking *Salt of the Earth* as a "new weapon for Russia... deliberately designed to inflame racial hatreds and to depict the United States as the enemy of all colored peoples."

That evening we listened to the twenty-minute speech of Congressman Jackson, broadcast by the local radio station. He described our film as an arm of Moscow's foreign policy. "If this picture is shown in Latin-America, Asia, and India, it will do incalculable harm, not only to the United States but to the cause of free people everywhere.... For instance, in one sequence, two deputy sheriffs arrest a meek American miner of Mexican descent and proceed to pistol-whip the miner's very young son." (That no such scene ever existed in script or imagination was no defense. There it was, stated as fact, over the airwaves of the entire United States. What defense is there to such a statement by one who ought to know—a member of Congress?) I will do everything in my power to prevent the showing of this Communist-made film in the theatres of America," Jackson concluded.

The speech was displayed on page one of the *El Paso Herald-Post* and other papers throughout the southwest. Adding up the long sequence of events which had been building so neatly to this speech, we knew we were in for a bad time. The question was, what could we do about it?

There were many things we had to do immediately. Among them was to rearrange our shooting schedule to give Rosaura's remaining scenes first consideration. We also had to face certain problems within our own ranks. One of the members of the crew became jittery and wished to leave. It took all our powers to persuade him to stay. He remained—like the proverbial spoiled apple in the basket. In an effort to counter the effect of Congressman Jackson's speech we sought to buy time on the air. The radio station refused to sell us any. Now we began to notice a drop in attendance of the families of the miners on the set. This required immediate attention as well. People were logically afraid. We had both to win back those we had lost and to keep those who remained.

But we were faced with other, even more serious, matters. Pathé Laboratories in Hollywood notified us that they would no longer process our film and were returning our cash balance. Every effort by Adrian Scott to find another laboratory in Hollywood failed. To make a motion picture without being able to review each day's shooting, through viewing "the rushes"—the prints of all the previous day's work—is to shoot as if blind. One may not take for granted even that the film was properly

exposed, that the scene is in focus, that the microphone does not show in a corner of the scene, that the sound is audible, that the clothes match, that the props are there, that the actors have performed well, even if they seemed to have been brilliant to the eye. Seeing rushes makes it possible to correct error through retakes. Without viewing rushes, making a film is like playing Russian roulette. With an inexperienced crew and cast it is to court disaster.

Months later, when we finally saw our developed and printed film, we discarded two whole scenes because of gross inadequacy. We discovered that the single most effective shot in the film was a double exposure. We lost both scenes because I had taken only one shot of each. We spent a week in the cutting-room trying to edit around some mismatching of clothes. The finished film still contains evidence of our failure to see rushes for half the film shot. In one scene, still in the film, a tall, thick iron pipe, on a stand, is badly visible. It is a light standard. It shows because whoever was operating the camera panned too far over and caught it. We were not able to cut the scene out because it was necessary for transition, but we wince whenever we view it.

There are passages of sound at which we also wince. For, following Pathé's example, the head of the company from which we rented our sound equipment notified us that he would not transfer our sound tape to film. We were *persona non grata* with the industry, we were informed by him, and it would jeopardize his good relations with the motion picture companies if he continued to service us.

Newspapermen began to descend upon us in numbers. We had to make firm policy concerning when and where we would see them, to prevent the shooting day from being lost, and the set turned into a newspaperman's quarry.

Congressman Jackson's speech was rebroadcast by the radio station many times each day and the newspaper itself became a horror sheet of incitement to vigilante action. All this took very little time to develop.

Within twenty-four hours a number of us received anonymous telephone calls telling us to get out of town or we would be sent out in black boxes. Similar calls, we discovered the following day, had been made to union officers and to Clint Jencks. The following night while his family slept, a number of shots were fired into his car, parked outside his

house. We called on the sheriff of the county. He was newly elected and had been supported by the Union. He had served as sheriff several terms ago and had been re-elected by a community ready for a change from the sheriff who had led battle against the union during the strike.

We found him as disturbed as we. He pointed out that he had only seven men to cover the entire county and that there was little of a positive nature he could do. The most important thing, he volunteered, was to do nothing to inflame feelings, even against himself. Seven men, in that huge county, were nothing to put any hopes in "if the skin of all this tension ever breaks."

In the midst of these murmurings—not yet crystallized into vigilante actions—the immigration men returned. One would not have recognized them, they were that "serious." They refused whisky, although the night was equally cold. They were accompanied by a lady. Rosaura was not yet at the lodge, having remained behind on the set to gather her wardrobe. I asked whether they had come to return her papers. They had not. They had come to arrest Rosaura and to take her to El Paso. There she would be offered voluntary deportation to Mexico. If she refused she would be indicted for illegal presence in the country. I told them that we would do nothing until we had obtained advice from our attorneys in Los Angeles. They suggested that I get it quickly because in one hour they were leaving with Rosaura, one way or another.

When Rosaura arrived we went to her room and I asked the officers to tell us the reason for arrest. They said that her passport had not been stamped. I asked what they thought she should have done when the border official waved her by, as was common practice there. Should she have *forced* the officer at the border to stamp her passport? Knocked him down, taken the stamp away from him, and applied it herself? I asked if all the girls now in the Catholic school were also being faced with the alternatives they offered Rosaura? They replied to all of this with "serious" calm by saying that they just worked for a living and if they didn't do what was required of them someone else would.

Paul Jarrico joined us. He asked what would happen if she refused voluntary deportation. He was told that in the morning Rosaura would be obliged to put up five hundred dollars bail against her appearance at a hearing to be set. The bail deposited, she would be free to return to us,

under bail, until the day of the hearing. Paul asked what guarantees existed for this promise. One of the men read the paragraphs on the warrant for arrest. They did indeed stipulate what he had stated.

We reached Ben Margolis in Los Angeles and he advised that Rosaura had no legal right to refuse arrest even if there was no basis for it. We were to post bail and keep him advised. Paul arranged to follow Rosaura in his own car, his request that he be permitted to accompany her in the immigration car having been denied. The matron was to be Rosaura's escort on the ride. We asked for thirty minutes so that Rosaura might have a bite of dinner. She had been working in the cold since the noon meal, some seven hours before. The request was refused. They would provide dinner for her in Silver City, which they did. Following this they drove to El Paso and subjected her to a relentless grilling during the several uninterrupted hours' drive. They demanded "information" concerning everyone in the company as well as herself.

In El Paso, they proposed to jail her. Paul's remonstrance, as sturdy in this instance as his optimism in others, caused them finally to agree to lodge her in a hotel with a guard in front of her door twenty-four hours a day.

In Silver City I stood outside in the cold long after the two cars had pulled away from the Lodge. I tried to find some rationale for this shoddy melodrama. Was all that surrounded us from Washington through Hollywood to El Paso and Silver City the result of a single shrewd conference of minds? If it was, everything had worked to perfection. They had thought they knew the length of our schedule. At the end of five weeks they would catch us with most of our money gone and the film incomplete. Much deadlier to intervene then than earlier when our money was unspent.

They reasoned that two-sevenths of Rosaura incomplete would leave a hole unpatchable. But they had miscalculated by a week. We had not only enjoyed our five weeks in Silver City; we had made the most of them. The problem facing us was not what had already been stolen from us, but whether the next ten days would be. If they were, then we were lost, truly.

What were their further plans? Were we dealing with shrewd, or powerful but intrinsically stupid men? Did they lay their plans forever without taking other equally real, living Americans into consideration?

The *Silver City Press* began to whip up a demand for popular action against the film. Simultaneously, among letters to the editor, most of them unsigned, one called upon *him* to do more than use words. The editor replied to this letter, stating that the writer had been guilty of “asking George to do it.”

The following days were tense. The wire services hounded us for stories and sent reporters to visit us. We determined to limit our replies to simple releases: we were shooting a film of the lives of the miners in the area with their cooperation.

Several small establishing scenes were necessary for the film; simple shots of a car driving through a town. We had selected the small community of Central for them. With the atmosphere growing difficult, we decided to photograph these scenes at once. Our production manager called upon the mayor of Central and asked for permission to make the shot. The mayor, a Mexican-American, agreed instantly. Our production manager then asked for the permission in writing. The mayor protested that this was not necessary. But our representative, under instructions to insist upon it, got it.

In the morning, early, with a small crew, I drove into the Central area and set up our camera in the street. A body of some eight men, several of them armed, strode toward us, ordering us to “get going.” I told them that we had permission to take the picture and was about to offer them the mayor’s letter when the spokesman of the group, a brother of the district attorney of the area, told me the mayor did not run the town; they did. They were a Citizens’ Committee and they were not going to allow a bunch of Communists to photograph their community. I asked them to wait until I could find the mayor, and sent the production man to find him. His office was only a few feet away, but he was not there. By this time the men were becoming unruly. If we didn’t move right away, they’d throw us out. I asked our crew to pack up. We left.

On our way to the Roos ranch, the mayor overtook us. He apologized. But he also complimented us for having avoided difficulty by leaving. He regretted that there was such a pitch of feeling among this

group of hot-headed individuals. But he couldn't placate them at the moment. In a day or two he would have things in hand again and we would be able to proceed.

As we slept that night, seventy-five vigilante—patriots were meeting secretly in the little village of Central, plotting to burn us out of this community.

The following day Mike Wilson remained at the lodge. He kept in touch with El Paso and the Roos ranch. Bail was offered in El Paso. But the immigration authorities refused to accept it. They didn't have to live up to the law, their promises, or the small print on the reverse side of the warrant. Paul telephoned Ben Margolis who flew into El Paso some hours later. But it was to no avail. The immigration men would not release Rosaura. Ben Margolis and Paul Jarrico engaged a local lawyer and together banged away at the law, still in vain. Mike joined them.

The union decided to send Joe T. Morales, one of the union actors, to Washington to seek the intervention of the New Mexican congressmen and senators. At a press conference in El Paso, Ben and Paul were attempting to unfold the story. They described the exemplary character of the people of the union and suddenly, the door to the hotel room opened and Alford Roos and an Indian, six-feet four, slim, stoic, with the bearing of a king, entered the room. Joe T. Morales had looked in on the conference en route to Washington. Joe talked, quietly, majestically. Alford Roos talked, volubly and passionately. And the papers, almost without exception, carried stories condemning the arrest and the promises and the new charge. But it was not possible to rescue Rosaura by debate.

Reporters were legion that day at the location on the Roos ranch. They demanded entrance to the set. It was refused. They hired a single motor plane and buzzed the location all day. I rearranged much of the sound shooting so that it might make sense silently if the buzz of the plane was so deeply imbedded in the sound track as to make it unusable. Messages came to me all day. Albuquerque, New Mexico, was on the phone—a strange group of people was skirting the crest of the hill above us—there was a vigilante parade of autos moving from Bayard to Silver City—El Paso was on the phone. I disregarded all of this. To each message I would turn my back and indicate to the cameraman, "The next

shot is here—three-shot-favoring Ramón.” “The next shot is here—very close.”

And finally I asked that no further messages be given me. I had to make time—time—time! With Joe T. Morales gone I had to give certain of his lines to other people—and Mike was not available. Mike was so adept at this kind of translation. But this was no longer a question of technical excellence. It was a matter of getting images on film. Even as I tore from one set-up to another I knew that one day, months off, when the film was exhibited, there would be those who would say, “... in spots the sound track was not quite professional.” I burst into a short hysterical laugh. They would be right. It would not be “quite” professional. And they would be right to say so. And I would not try to explain. There is no explaining technical inadequacy in a Hollywood world. But I would not be embarrassed by the criticisms. All I wished now was to get thirty-five scenes shot today, despite the plane and the reporters and the messages, despite everything. I found a young woman who resembled Rosaura from the back and I literally dragged her from one spot to another to get missing pieces of shots of scenes of Esperanza and Ramón over her shoulder and across her half profile. Her skin was very light and it bore no earthly resemblance to the color of Rosaura’s. I called for make-up and applied it to her face and neck and ears. And thus it happened that the only player who used make-up in the entire production was the double for Rosaura’s ear.

The following day again the same tensions. That evening we received reports that following the parade of thirty-five vigilante cars with signs calling upon the community to rid itself of Communist conspirators, spies and saboteurs, the vigilantes had called upon the Silver City Chamber of Commerce and the local post of the American Legion and asked for support. Both organizations refused it, categorically. Seventy-five vigilantes had met the night before and twenty-four hours later they had not won a single new recruit.

Who were these people? The handful of little shopkeepers; the sour, self-appointed representatives of the great mining companies, to whom the word union was synonymous with subversion. To them any one of dark skin who wished to lift himself above the level of slavery was a dog worthy only of the rope and faggot. Behind them were the

local mine superintendents who looked upon any activity which cemented the relations between the miners and other elements of the community as "the revolutionary rising of those people." There were the politicians defeated in the last election, a handful again. And then that stalwart group of permanent scabs imported for pay whenever the mine superintendents required them. And some backward sheepherders from the hills. To this conglomerate body was added the salt and pepper of the drunks and dipsomaniacs of every hamlet in the area. Vigorous imbibing of fiery fluids spurred them on to more heroic deeds.

On the third day the rumor came to us that, believing the film to be stored there, the vigilantes planned to burn the Roos ranch to the ground that night. This brought the union into immediate action. Eighteen men were assigned to guard the ranch with rifles. Twelve of the men were ex-G.I.'s and six were older union men, actors in the film, who insisted upon being part of the guard. The union asked the sheriff to deputize these men. He refused, believing that if he did so the vigilantes would also demand deputization and the situation might inflate to disastrous proportions if he refused them.

Because we had to, we tried again to photograph a car passing through a town, the shot which had been prevented in Central. We chose a spot directly in front of the union hall. We planned it carefully so that it might be filmed with a minimum of public attention and within a matter of minutes. When all the instructions had been given, the camera was hastily unloaded from a truck and set up. Just as the signal was given for the camera to turn and the car to start forward, we saw two carloads of men driving hard upon us. As we finished making the shot the cars were brought to a swift, screeching halt in front of us and some dozen men leaped out. They made for the camera, knocked it over, and then began slugging their way through our ranks.

Sonja Dahl Biberman, her English accent under the most rigorous control, was moving about among the largely youthful contingent of attacking vigilantes, saying, "Now if you don't stop this, I will take down all your license numbers." Nothing could have been more effective. She was attractive, ladylike in voice, and she succeeded in breaking up the mass character of the attack. Two men singled out Floyd Bostick and were punching him over the heart. She rushed there and Bostick was

able to wring himself loose. I was busy with several of the crew righting the camera and lifting it into the truck, safe from more serious damage. The finder was broken and we were obliged to finish subsequent shooting without one. The camera stowed, I came back to the embattled group and shouted that we would leave immediately. One of the older vigilantes said, "You had yore camera pointed right at our ballpark. We spent f' thousand dollahs buildin' that park and we don't wan' no Roosian commonists takin' pitchers o' our ball park." I nodded my understanding and we started for the union hall. But the bully boys had not had their fill. They followed us. At the entrance to the union hall they were joined by another contingent headed by the president of a bank. We had foolishly neglected to make any deposits there and perhaps he was properly indignant, although he stubbornly denied it. He was a patriot, he had told others in the community, not a subversive like the bank in Silver City. He wouldn't have taken any of our Russian money.

As the two groups met, the big-bellied man who had defended the pristine honor of the ball park saw Clint Jencks walking toward the union hall. Holding his belly with one hand, he ran after Clint, grabbed him by the shoulder from behind, whipped him around, and hit him savagely in the eye; a large ring upon his middle finger struck squarely in the center of the eye. Johnny swung back at him. Several of the attacking group drew pistols, but somehow we completed our withdrawal into the union hall.

As soon as possible we left for the Roos ranch. We had gotten our shot and had paid for it with a broken finder and some ugly bruises. In the few minutes inside the union hall we had come to the conclusion that even if the rumor concerning the burning of the ranch had been false, it was by now probably true.

After dinner at the lodge, the crew talked our situation over and decided to share guard duty with the miners. Volunteers were called for by the crew's shop steward. I had formidable quantities of work ahead in preparation for the next day's shooting. I felt, frankly, that guard duty was not the best use of my time, and I wished heartily that my raised hand would not be accepted. But it was. I asked to be on the first watch

so that I might be back in time to do my necessary homework. This was agreed to.

With a young member of the crew I took off at about seven-thirty in a convertible for the Roos ranch some fourteen miles away. I had never developed a decent respect for the reality of violence, or for its logically concomitant emotion, fear. It never occurred to me that riding to the ranch in a convertible was stupid. I had no realization that from behind any bush in the fourteen miles of utter darkness a rifle bullet might sing out at us. My companion had been through four years of battle in the Pacific and had equally little respect for the lurking dangers. We had been given light signals to be flashed by our headlights so that we might gain easy access to the ranch. We stopped at a liquor store to pick up some candy and a bottle of whisky for the guards, and rode through the cold, bleak darkness at sixty miles an hour; another stupidity. Our fortune was better than we deserved—we arrived at the ranch.

A small central building which we used as a kitchen for our noon meal had been turned into the guard house. We opened the door and walked in. What I saw made me wish to laugh out loud. The interior of the little adobe building reminded me of nothing so much as a movie set in which a third-rate western was being shot. There were no lights. Six men were standing, each with his back to a wall, beside a window. They leaned on rifles or shot-guns and their eyes peered into the darkness outside. But any inclination to laugh was wiped out in short order by the soberness of the actors. There were no words of greeting. We came in, unloaded the candy and poured drinks in paper cups for all of us. Then we sat down. I asked where the other guards were. The younger men were deployed around the hills doing extended formations to flush out any vigilantes in the neighborhood.

Silence again. I saw Floyd Bostick rubbing his chest lightly. Recalling how he had been pummeled that afternoon, I asked if he were in much pain. The ribs were a little swollen, that was all; made it a little hard to breathe. I noticed two guns by him and commented upon them. Oh, he said, he had a rifle for distance, a shotgun for closer range, and he pulled a hammer out of his hip pocket and raised it for me to see—"this" for real close quarters. There was a moment's pause and then Floyd spoke again. His voice was normally quiet and soft with the

accents of the South, in which he had lived his entire life. Now it was even quieter and softer because of the pain when he breathed and spoke. "They can beat me up, mebbe," he said, "and mebbe they kin kill me. But they cain't make me take a step ba'k'ards in this town. Ef I'm still here, I'm goin' to the post office fer my mail in the mornin' with my gun in my hand. An' they better give me the street."

There was a pause again. A little behind me was Iguado, a Mexican-American miner of over seventy. He had a most majestic head; dark skin, firm, noble features crowned with white hair. In his own kind of soft, quiet, accented speech: "Dey get me may-be, but I get t'ree first." Again quiet. In that quiet I found physical fear. I found it in the grim, sober reality of men with families who without fuss were prepared to lay down their lives that night to keep the sets up for shooting the next day.

But as I looked more closely into the aged, bronzed face of Iguado, I saw profound fatigue of more ancient vintage than just this night. The shameful necessity confronting him showed in his eyes. I swallowed back my romanticizing of these men, ambushed in the darkness of their own country. What was glamorous in decent, hard-working Americans, guns in hand, guns with bullets in them, facing other men with guns filled with bullets? What glamour in risking life to make a movie about their lives? What was admirable about any part of this cold, grim evening, or the ugly reality that underlay it? Iguado caught my stare.

"Not nice, tonight," he said. He shook his head.

"Not like *you're* used to," said someone out of the darkness.

"No—it's different," I replied. "I'm used to people destroying others with words. Here they use rifles."

"No good, no way," said Iguado. "No place."

"All vigilantes!" someone volunteered. "All the same!"

"Perhaps you're right," I said. I hadn't thought of it that way.

"Tell us how it was there, in Hollywood."

"That's a... well, it's a long story."

"Tonight, maybe... be a long night."

And they waited.

Part Two

HOLLYWOOD 1953

I

It was bitter cold in the shack. And raw. The men peered out through the windows, and waited.

The opening lines of narration in the film, spoken by Esperanza, occurred to me. I reminded the men of them: "Who can say where it began, my story? I do not know. But this day I remember as the beginning of an end." And I recalled for them such a day in our lives.

A subpoena to appear before the Un-American Activities Committee of the House of Representatives of the Congress of the United States. I became one of a special group of nineteen selected from vocal opponents of the committee.

At that time thousands of persons in Hollywood alone opposed it for riding herd on the people of the country, for telling them what kind of life the committee would allow them to build for themselves. Like the vigilantes out...

"But you know all this," I said. "Better than I."

"We like to know the battles of our friends."

"I get some coffee," said a miner.

While the coffee was poured, I picked up the story with our trip across country to Washington. Plane fare and six dollars a day expenses provided by the government for what was called "an investigation into the infiltration of subversive propaganda into motion pictures." The producers declared they made pictures for public approval. That was the error, the committee's representatives intimidated.

"Some investigation!" one of the men said. "All over five months before it begins."

"But not the tactics," I explained. "The hearings began with witnesses against the producers. They gave the producers a chance to save themselves. They could have their jobs in exchange for our creative lives."

The door to the shack opened. The man posted outside brought a report from the scouting party. There was considerable vigilante activity about half-way back toward the mine. They might be aiming to attack the sets on the other side of the gully. If they did, the scout-

ing party would take after them. The men in the hut were not to be drawn into it. If the attack broke toward the hut, then the scouting party would stay out. Did they agree? They agreed. The men inside fixed their eyes on the windows, fitted their bodies into the walls, and collectively created a silence that invited continuation of the story.

A voice in the room cried, "Hold it!" Everyone went stiff. Every eye was on the windows. A second of deathly silence. We heard the sound of running feet. The rifles at the window were ready. Then came some flashes of light, two short and two long. Our signal. A figure ran past the window toward the gully. The rifles lowered again.

"So y'all went to jail, eh?"

"No. The committee lost the battle. The hearings received a bad press. The country didn't like what was going on. And suddenly, on a Friday afternoon, after only ten of the nineteen had been called to the stand, the 'investigation' was called off."

I told of our short period of seeming success. Eric Johnston, president of the Motion Picture Producers Association, had said the industry would not submit to censorship, and that he would never be party to anything as un-American as a blacklist.

There were several snorts.

"But he changed his tune—or maybe his fiddle!"

"Not for some little time. We went back to Hollywood and to work," I replied. "And then the floor was cut out from under Hollywood. Eric Johnston called the producers to an emergency meeting at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York."

There was a long pause. The men standing at the windows were stretching the long string. A meeting, held five years before in a hotel in New York, might conceivably deprive their families of a father and husband in the next six hours.

"Big men!" one of them said quietly. "What are they big for? Only to serve someone bigger. Their bigness ain't worth a damn."

Another picked up the string.

"How many people in this country? Hun'erd 'n' fifty million? And six guys in a committee whip 'em into line. We ain't cowards. Don't go round shakin' before people we put in office. But they got

us all staked out like mine claims, with fences between us. That's how!" Then he turned to me. "How'd *you* figure yours?"

"We didn't have to. Man named Ed Sullivan, columnist for the New York *Daily News*, a paper that backed the committee from the beginning, laid the answer on the printed line. He wrote: 'Wall Street jiggled the strings, that's all.'"

"And that's all there was to it. Before we could look around, Hollywood gave in. We were fired. Congress cited us for contempt. Then the producers went to work on us. Wanted us to turn tail with them. 'Be loyal to us,' they said. And because we remained loyal to the First Amendment instead, we became 'subversives.' A feat of magic, accomplished in a couple of weeks."

"N' then you went to jail?"

"Not for almost three years. We battled through all the courts. When Justices Rutledge and Murphy died just as we reached the Supreme Court we received only two votes. Then we went to jail. The best ones in the country, from Texas to Connecticut."

"Fer not lettin' vigilantes bust yer skulls open."

"We're tryin' to stop the same thing tonight! Maybe we go, too?"

"First, we make picture," Iguado said.

Automobile headlights showed outside. We stopped and waited. One of the officers had arrived from the union hall. He reported that a large group of vigilantes had assembled in the little town of Central, some two miles away. They had just gone into meeting. Probably take them a couple of hours to get licked up. Get started about eleven o'clock. The union would have people at the hall all night. If anything happened, it was to be relayed to the hall right away. He asked if the men were okay. He looked at Iguado and at Bostick. He waited. The men all looked out past the windows. He left.

I passed some chocolate bars around. And ate one. Iguado's phrase kept running around in my mind: "All vigilantes." But was there no difference at all between brutality and reluctant surrender to it?

"Did y'all start the movie soon's you got out of jail?"

"No. A few weeks before the last of the Ten were released, the committee announced a second investigation of Hollywood and the

issuance of some seventy subpoenas. The studios welcomed the 'investigation' and officially promised full cooperation. Then the dam broke—and the flood swept out across the country."

A Mexican-American who had not spoken previously asked: "When was that?"

"In—1951."

"But when did they begin?" he asked again.

"In 1947," I replied.

"They didn't come back for all those years?"

"No."

"Then you Brothers in Hollywood held 'em back fer two and a half years!"

"The strength of America held them back. We were kind of a symbol, that's all. The committee was in a terrible hurry to spread blacklist all over the country in 1947. Announced they were going to. But they were afraid to move too fast. They have a healthy respect for America—all those 'vigilantes' as you call them."

The Mexican-American Brother spoke again.

"Sure, they got respect. Their hatred is only respect. They conquer one town, one industry, one profession like yours. But never the country, never for long, never enough of it. They try to beat us down. They jail us too. They try to beat you down. What happens? They bring us together."

He looked out of the window a long moment.

"Vigilantes put things together with spit. They unstick easy. Even your year in jail."

"I was only six months in jail. Dmytryk and I. The others got a year."

"How come?"

"We didn't know then. We still don't. Dmytryk and I were before another judge. We thought it was that judge's independence. But when we got out, Dmytryk became an informer. So? Not that that matters any more."

"Yes, it matters," the same man continued. "Informers' words against you turn into vigilante guns across the gully—pointing at *us*. It matters. *You* are blacklisted. *We* have to fight with guns in our

hands to make a movie of ourselves. That is what informers do to our country. It will not last. Not in this country! But this is what they do.”

He turned sharply toward me.

“I am angry only with him. Not with you. You are a Brother. You stood. But what he did *matters!* What your movie producers did, too! I say, don’t forgive them! They know what they’re doing! Like Ramón says in the picture, ‘Fight ‘em all!’”

“But in one thing you’re wrong. We didn’t stand. We held, yes. But we didn’t stand. Standing is different. They knocked us over. If it weren’t for people like you—who are still standing where you stood—as a union, as a people, as a culture—we couldn’t even make a movie today.”

“Okay. But we *never* made one, until you came. So for us, you’re standing on movie ground! That matters too!”

In the full warmth of his emotion—a man I had never seen until that evening—I was suddenly struck by a staggering thought. To stand in that hut waiting for attack was no way to demonstrate faith in America. It was tantamount to accepting vigilantism as the way of our life. And it wasn’t! Faith in America demanded unceasing struggle for its law, and for its application by those charged with giving protection under it. It had to be insisted upon, and fought for, and never surrendered. The attack had struck us all so suddenly, it had immobilized us. But it was not too late.

A sudden, small noise was heard, indistinct, but seemingly from across the gully. Then the low grinding sounds of a car being rapidly gunned through its various gears to high. We could hear it bumping along the rough, dirt road. It sounded heavy—like a truck. Nothing could be seen. It was a good quarter-mile off. We listened hard—listened and almost saw with our ears. The volume of sound did not increase because the road around our sets was an arc described around the hut. No one spoke. It was obvious the truck was making for the mine shaft set. Our bodies tensed—waiting—waiting for the sound of a crash. Our instructions were to stay put. We must not allow them to draw us all to a single point. The Roos ranch was only a few yards from our hut, and we had been warned they meant to

burn it to the ground. The guard outside our hut had his eyes on it. A rifle shot would bring us all out toward it.

From the other side of the ranch house a shot was fired. But it was not our guard; it was too far away. We waited. Another shot was heard coming from what seemed our side of the gully. Whose shot? It was almost beyond endurance to wait inside. But as we listened, the motor seemed now to be moving off toward our right. If that were true then the truck had passed the set and was moving out toward the road that led to the highway. We became more certain of it. The sound was fading.

If we could only be certain that all the shots had been ours. The miners would have fired over the truck, avoiding any hits, merely to frighten the driver off.

The shots introduced a new level of reality. I was profoundly frightened. And as I looked at the men around me I was more frightened. Because they weren't. A sense of utter unreality then possessed me. This was the United States of America! The lives of these men dare not be lost—must not be risked. This was the state of New Mexico! There were law enforcement agencies somewhere within it. They had to be found. The *union* guard was all wrong. It must be replaced with proper agencies of law. I had to get to the union hall.

Two of the men of the scouting party came into the hut. They confirmed what we had supposed. The truck had started from the point back toward the mine and it had meant to ram the set. The first two shots had been fired onto the ground ahead of the truck to warn it off. The third one had cut the air between the truck and the set as the truck neared it. The truck never left the road. It continued on, past the set, and made for the highway.

Did this attempt herald others? Would this frighten them away for the evening? No one could hazard a guess. I suggested that word ought to be taken to the union hall—and I volunteered for it.

At the union hall the local's officers were in meeting. They had themselves come to the conclusion that the law must be called into the developing situation. They had telephoned the sheriff some time ago. He again stated his helplessness—with only seven men in the county. The union officers had asked him to join them in telephoning

the state police chief in Santa Fe, four hundred miles away. The sheriff had come. They had telephoned. The chief was familiar with this area from the period of the long strike. Fifteen minutes after they had spoken with him, he had left Santa Fe with thirty-five cars of state police, headed for Silver City—half the police force of the state of New Mexico. There were six or seven hours of waiting before us.

When I returned to the lodge, I discovered the proprietor standing in the shadows, rifle in hand, protecting those who were asleep against any sudden change of mind on the part of the vigilantes. He knew our film was stored in the lodge. He meant for it still to be there in the morning.

The second group of the crew's volunteers had already left the lodge to join the union members at the hut. Everyone else was asleep. I had yet to prepare the shooting schedule for the next day.

I sat down upon the bed in my room, pulled a blanket over myself, drew my script and various notebooks close to the light on the night table. Gale's face increasingly cross-dissolved itself upon the pages before me. I had talked to her only four hours before. And after we had talked it was worse. It always was after talking with her. I hadn't seen her or the children, now, in over two months. I brushed aside all that the night conjured up for evaluation: the people of Silver City, of Hollywood, the state police riding in from Santa Fe, Rosaura, Ben, Mike and Paul in El Paso, the Brothers at the hut, the individuals whose money, loaned to us, was already spent—and Gale and our children.

Poring over the list of unshot scenes, I selected those for the next day that were *the* most important, knowing that all had to be shot or there would be no picture, that a week's work was a minimum! And then?

As I lay upon my bed in Silver City, I remembered Gale's greeting when I announced that we were incorporated and in business. Her embrace was warm and long. And then:

"I hope that we—and the children—can enjoy some part of these years ahead—together. We're important, too, aren't we? Good luck, my darling."

I fell asleep, feeling again the oppressive heaviness in the chest that I had felt in prison.

II

At seven the next morning, the shop steward of the crew informed me that unless the crew had some sort of police protection it was not going to location. The reason was clear to me. One member of the crew had come on this job as a job. He now feared for his life. He refused to endanger it and called upon the others to join with him. That he had no special loyalty to the meaningfulness of this undertaking, no one held against him. He had brought valuable equipment with him. That he loved his equipment even more than himself was also his right. Indeed he and his gear were also invaluable to us. He had a right to protection against extraordinary risk for himself and his equipment. The crew extended it, although many of its members would have gone to work under any circumstances.

Time was more valuable by the minute. We had still a good five days of work until the film would be completed. I called the sheriff and asked if the state police had arrived. They had, an hour ago, after driving all night. The chief was taking a brief nap. Did he know where? No. Would he ask the chief to call me the moment he awoke? He would.

For four hours we paced the living room of the lodge. There was almost unbroken silence. At eleven o'clock the chief called. I described our situation and asked for an escort. He refused one. He was not in this area to protect anyone in particular. He was there to permit everyone to proceed with normal occupations. The roads to the ranch were thoroughly patrolled; had been since six that morning. No one need fear to go about his business. I reported the conversation to the crew verbatim. I had made the call in their presence. They agreed to leave for location.

It was four miles to the main road. Our line of cars took off. I led the way. As we came to the main road a state police car zoomed by going north. A second later another zoomed by going south. We turned into the main road and proceeded down its straight-as-a-die length for ten miles. Every five hundred yards a state police car passed us in one direction or another. As the fifth or sixth car passed, my sensation of relief made me raise an arm in greeting. It was not

answered. The formality of the police indicated their seriousness. We proceeded to the ranch and went to work.

We discovered later that the union guard had indeed checked the vigilantes from attacking the ranch the previous night. The vigilantes had remained in meeting all through the night and when the first state police cars had been reported to them they decided that they must strike at once. As they left their meeting place and headed for the main road they passed an old battered car in which a man was asleep. They paid no attention to it. But that car signaled the state police, and when the vigilantes reached the main road some ten state police cars were stationed there. The vigilantes looked, paused, turned around and went back to their occupations, whatever they were. The police cars continued their patrolling hour after hour after hour.

During the morning news came to us that the Dean of the cathedral at Silver City and two of the priests of the area, joined by the Bishop of El Paso, had taken to the air and had urged the people of the entire area to conduct themselves in a brotherly, American fashion. To maintain order and in every way assist the agencies of law.

That day we shot thirty-five scenes. It was a good day.

In El Paso it was a bad day, although the law was ours. The immigration officer at the border had, in failing to stamp Rosaura's passport, committed what was known legally as a ministerial error, which did not invalidate the legality of Rosaura's presence in the United States. We had the law, but Rosaura remained in custody. In Washington the representatives of the state of New Mexico were most sympathetic and would look into the matter further. It would — take a little time. Paul had called earlier asking Mike to join him and Ben in El Paso. Mike left, unwillingly. He had infinitely more attachment to the shooting than to legal processes. His presence through the shooting and through the difficulties was helpful and heartening beyond all description.

At five o'clock that afternoon a police car entered the Roos ranch. An officer sought me out and asked that I be ready at the lodge at eight o'clock. A car would pick me up. Would I have our production manager accompany me? I asked who would pick me up and

where we would be going. He did not know. I told him, most respectfully, that I would not leave the lodge until I knew who had sent for me, who was picking me up, and where we would be going. He returned in half an hour and said that the sheriff would call for me. I was not to advertise the fact. I stated my satisfaction and agreement.

At eight o'clock the sheriff arrived. The production manager and I took seats in the rear of the car. I was interested that the car circled in its tracks many times. The sheriff obviously did not wish to be followed.

We finally pulled up at the rear entrance to the cathedral. The sheriff, the production manager and I stepped out. His assistant parked the car elsewhere and joined us later. We followed the sheriff into the courtyard of the cathedral ground and through a door and up a flight of stairs and we found ourselves finally in the Dean's study. Gathered there were the Dean, the priest of Hanover, the chief of the state police, his assistant, the saloonkeeper of Central, the Mexican-American *politico* from Silver City, the sheriff, his assistant, our production manager and I.

I found this the most fascinating assemblage of people of which I had ever been a part. I looked forward to the discussion, although I could not imagine its content.

The chief impressed me at once as a gentlemanly, peace-loving peace officer. His speech was cultivated and reserved. He was respected by the union. Eminently fair during the strike, he had actually prevented violence on the part of the local sheriff on many occasions.

The chief's opening remarks were to the effect that a canvassing of the area impelled him to the belief that a dangerous situation existed. There were a body of men in the area, at that moment, who had been brought there to kill. Though he had some seventy-five officers with him, in an area as large and as open as Grant County, it was utterly impossible for him to feel that absolute security could be achieved. If one man were killed on either side, a very perilous situation might result. Before it could be controlled a good many bodies might be lying on the roads and fields of the entire area. He had a proposal. He suggested that we pack up the following morning and be

ready to leave by nightfall. If he could spread the word that this was going to take place, he felt certain that, for that length of time, things could be kept in hand.

The Dean exploded. In a speech rustling with the most delectable brogue he asked what decent man wanted to be run out of town for no fault of his. And what decent man would run out of town when he was a peaceful individual going about his peaceable business! And, furthermore, he would not permit such a thing. And he turned to me and told me to sit tight.

I thanked the Dean but said I wanted to reply to the friendly and honest statements of the chief. I admitted that I was an amateur in this matter even though my reputation for love of overthrowing governments should have made me a little more conversant with the subject of violence. However, I was stuck with reality. It occurred to me that the very worst thing we could do in this situation would be to leave town. Once these hoodlums got a sense of victory they would probably go hog-wild and really try to take over the town. I pointed to the fact that they had shot Clint Jencks's car full of bullets outside his house only the evening before, frightening his family almost out of their minds. If we left they might wish to fill more than Clint's car with their lead. Furthermore, if we left, the film would have to be junked. And I did not propose to junk it.

I wished to suggest another approach. We needed a week to finish the film. But I would do it in three days. I expressed my belief that not only must the police remain until we had gone, but that they should make it very clear that they intended to leave a contingent for a time after we had departed. The serious time, in my opinion, would begin immediately after our departure. It seemed to me the vigilantes were not primarily bent upon dispersing our film company. They wished to break up the new feeling that had begun to develop in the community. Only if they succeeded in that would they any longer have any place in the community. They would move toward any act of violence which would guarantee that place.

"Good for you," cried the Dean.

The priest of Hanover also agreed, but he had another comment. He asked me to undertake to convey to the union, and to Clint

Jencks, that Clint had outlived his usefulness in this area. He had done excellent work for the union. He had served the Mexican-American people selflessly and with great credit to himself. But because he was an Anglo, championing Mexican-Americans, he had become the symbol of everything the rabid, racist elements in the area feared and hated. The priest stated as his conviction that if the union could be persuaded to his view, and Clint assigned elsewhere, a distinct contribution would be made to the pacification of the community. I agreed to convey his message.

I sought Clint out immediately and reported the conversation to him. He asked me to discuss it with the officers of the union. They were the proper recipients of the point of view. He had his own conviction on the matter. But he preferred to present it only after the union officials of the local had discussed it.

As I related the conversation to the union officers, they nodded their heads as if they had heard it before. They held in high esteem the priest from whom this observation came. They discussed his idea with seriousness and respect. But the discussion didn't take long. Their entire experience had dictated to them that no one gained from appeasing vigilantes. The community, equally with the union, would suffer from it. The vigilantes didn't hate Clint Jencks but what he stood for. And what he stood for was decency in the community. If Clint were let out, the union would be forcing the community to fight the battle all over again. And from a weaker starting point. The battle was against racism and vigilantism. One had to be clear about that. It had to be fought. The vote was unanimous. Clint was to remain—unless, of course, Clint believed that the physical safety of his family and himself counseled otherwise.

Clint's reply, their reaction indicated, was exactly what they had expected from him. He said that they had been in the struggle together for six years. It was not over. There were thousands of families who could not leave the area, or the struggle. They could not—then he would not. That was the answer, although he asked for permission to discuss the question with his wife and children.

The state police remained and filming continued.

From El Paso we learned that the only possible next legal step for Rosaura would be an appeal to the appellate court in New Orleans. At the earliest, it could be filed only two days after our shooting had to be concluded. The die was cast. We all agreed Rosaura must accept voluntary deportation. She did so and returned to Mexico.

Two days before we left, the vigilantes secured a theater in Silver City. They also got a film from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. It was a documentary called *The Hoaxsters*, made in Hollywood for just such occasions, presumably. A good, hot, cold-war piece of provocation. The vigilantes considered it just the article to heat up this still peaceful community against the "Reds." With this event the Hollywood syndrome had come full circle. It was now furnishing cultural artillery to vigilantes in a tiny mining town of New Mexico, to use against its citizens, to overthrow their peaceableness, their fraternity, and their deeply ingrained sense of fair play. Small wonder that we Hollywood people felt more shame than bitterness that day. And no wonder at all at the pride we felt in the people of that area who, in droves, stayed away from the hoax they knew *The Hoaxsters* to be. The theater was opened to the public, without charge. Every business in Silver City was ordered, by the vigilantes, to close down for the day, or suffer the consequences. Every business shut down. But only one hundred people entered the theater. And on that day one of the largest businessmen in Silver City made his biggest truck available to us. That saved us a half-day's shooting time. He refused any payment.

On the morning our cars left, the union had wished to organize a caravan to escort us some fifty miles outside the city. We had counseled against it. Our cars left in caravans of two. At our final farewell there was not a dry eye. Men and women, normally shy and reserved, embraced and kissed each other openly and unashamedly.

III

The caravans left the lodge that Saturday morning by two routes and at half-hour intervals. Because a *New York Times* reporter whom I had known for many years arrived just as I was about to leave, I was delayed an hour. The interview over, I took off alone. I had no more than cleared the populated section of Silver City than I noticed a car in my rear view mirror. It was driving down at me with speed. About the third look back revealed that it had no license plate. Alert by now to my congenital insensitivity to danger I decided there was nothing to lose by losing that car. I stepped on the gas. But the faster I went the faster the car behind me followed.

When I had first seen him he was perhaps seventy yards behind me. By the time I determined to lose him he was no more than thirty yards behind. My speedometer showed eighty but I had gained no more than twenty yards. I put my foot to the floor. I reached ninety miles an hour. And the car was still there. I began to calculate every curve, seeking by proper maneuvering to save yards. For twenty minutes we matched speed. I wondered why he didn't shoot my tires. Then I understood the danger involved in it for him. At the speed we were traveling, if my car were to roll on the road he himself might not be able to stop in time to avoid smashing into me.

I had to keep ahead of him. Therein lay my safety. I bent over the wheel seeking more sensitive control. Only twenty minutes to Lordsburg. Ten minutes outside that city I saw ahead the truck of one of our caravans. I slowed down just in time to slide into place behind it. The car behind swept by me. As it passed the driver raised his hand in salute and grinned broadly. Then I noticed a medical insignia on the rear of the car. I learned later that he was a friendly doctor who had tended to members of our crew.

He had been trying to catch up to wave goodbye. He was on his way to deliver a baby.

In Lordsburg I bought some papers and sat down with them over a cup of coffee. We were in headlines. It was like reading about some other group of people in some other place. They made our story pop

as if it had been enacted by demons and demi-gods, participants who bore no resemblance to members of the human race.

RACISTS QUIT SILVER CITY

COMMUNIST FILM COMPANY FINALLY GIVES UP

Then the news:

The racists from Hollywood who were discovered making a secret, communist film in Silver City, New Mexico, today gave up and quit the area. Exposed by Congressman Donald L. Jackson of the House Committee on Un-American Activities in a speech before Congress on February 28th, he called upon the government and the people to rally behind him. The racist group was finally driven out of Silver City today. Denounced by Roy M. Brewer, head AFL spokesman of the studio workers of Hollywood, repudiated by Walter Pidgeon, President of the Actors Guild, their leading actress discovered to have entered the country illegally, and deported, the Red racist company was given final notice to get out by the patriotic citizens of Silver City. The air of Grant County is once again, pure, American and free from the stench of racist propaganda. The film was financed by the Communist Mine, Mill and Smelters Union whose violence on the picket lines of the year-long strike against Empire Zinc brought jail sentences to many leaders of this Red-dominated Union. Good riddance to the racists and congratulations to Silver City.

I found myself overcome by a sudden nausea. I saw hundreds, nay thousands, of papers in every city in the country carrying this tale. I saw decent Americans sitting over radios, television sets, shaking their heads and wondering what these subversive racists wouldn't try next. Always sneaking off into corners! Always trying to stir up trouble among people of color! Never would come out in the open and say whatever they wanted to say like anybody else. And some of them Hollywood people, too. But just like all the rest. A red is a red is a red is a racist. A congressman said so; Hollywood said so; Silver City said so; the papers said so. What more proof could a decent person wish?

I left the restaurant and drove to a gas station. I debated whether to show my credit card to the attendant. If he recognized my name

there might be trouble. Better pay cash. Incredible. One newspaper story and I was nauseated, numb, frightened. After all I had experienced! Why?

"You coming from Silver City?"

The attendant's question gave point to my speculations.

"Yes."

"You part of that film group?"

"Yes."

"What the hell went on up there?"

"Haven't you read the papers?"

"Yes. That's why I'm asking."

"We finished a film about the miners."

"Finished, huh? Papers said you'd been run out. See what I mean?"

I pulled the papers out from under my arm, and flipped my hand over the face of the top one.

"I've been wondering what people will think about all this."

"Well, I reckon it's about like my old man says. Says he reads every word in them things and when he gets through he cain't remember a damned thing he read. But the next day he goes ahead and reads it all over again. Been doin' it for forty years."

"Thank you, very much. And thank him for me."

"Why?"

"I haven't really read a paper for about three months. I'd forgotten just what people do with them."

The attendant laughed. "Well, in this part of the country you know what people mostly do with 'em, don't you?"

It didn't matter for the moment that his views were perhaps not typical, not representative. He had dissolved my nausea in the way one decent, witty human being can. He sent me on my way with at least the ability to see the road. And the eighteen hours of driving proved a godsend. By the time I had been on my own for several hours, had eaten and accustomed myself to the roll of the car and the swish-by of that incredibly monumental countryside, energies began to pour back into me. Energies necessary to face this complex place called America.

So we were racists! Stirring up the people!

Congressman Jackson, speaking to Congress about *Salt of the Earth* and the people who made it, said:

The name of the picture is unknown to me at the present time.... The picture itself is being financed by the Communist-dominated United Mine, Mill and Smelter Works Union. [First inaccuracy: the union is dominated by its members. Second inaccuracy: it had contributed not one penny toward financing our film. Third inaccuracy: the name of the union is the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers.]

Herbert Biberman is the actual producer of this Communist-inspired film endeavor, while Gale Sondergaard is the co-producer. [Fourth inaccuracy: Herbert Biberman is the director. Fifth inaccuracy: Gale Sondergaard's only connection with the picture was that she did *not* play the leading role. Sixth inaccuracy: the film endeavor was not Communist-inspired. It was inspired by the House Un-American Activities Committee and its effect on two hundred creative film craftsmen.]

Paul Jarrico is a writer working on the picture. [Only a slight inaccuracy: Paul Jarrico is a writer and an excellent one, but he acted as the producer of the film.]

Michael Wilson and Will Geer are two more uncooperative witnesses said to be active in the production of the film. [Said to be? Are! Mike's name was listed on every script of *Salt of the Earth* as its author.]

So far, the congressman had not been a particularly reliable witness. But to read on:

This picture is being made in the state of New Mexico not far from the Los Alamos atomic proving grounds and, as Mr. Riesel points out in his article, "Where you try to hide secret weapons, you find concentrations of Communist."

Also in his article Mr. Riesel states that Silver City, New Mexico, the scene of the picture, is located near vital zinc concentrate mines, and that the band of movie people, and I quote from his article, "few of whom will ever find work again in Hollywood, is shooting a propaganda movie produced, managed, written, acted and edited by men and women who have been charged by congressional witnesses with being part of the secret pro-Soviet apparatus in this country."

Mr. Speaker, I have received reports of the sequences filmed to date during the making of the picture and it depicts exactly what might be

expected from a group of Communists engaged in the making of a motion picture. The picture is deliberately designed to inflame racial hatreds and to depict the United States of America as the enemy of all colored peoples. If this picture is shown in Latin America, Asia and India, it will do incalculable harm not only to the United States but to the cause of free people everywhere. In effect this picture is a new weapon for Russia. For instance, in one sequence, two deputy sheriffs arrest a meek American miner of Mexican descent and proceed to pistol whip the miner's very young son. The production company of this picture also imported two auto carloads of colored people for the purpose of shooting a scene of mob violence.

The congressman had never heard of Negroes working as technicians in a Hollywood movie. Mr. Roy M. Brewer's unions did not permit it. Mr. Riesel, the labor expert, undoubtedly also knew of Hollywood's anti-Negro practices. When he heard that we had Negroes in our company apparently all Riesel could think of was violence. And that felt right to Jackson too.

Then the former publicity man placed the Congressional toga upon his shoulders and in his own name summed up the calumny:

"... after having lost Hollywood as a source of income, and this only recently, [they] have succeeded in acquiring another source of income, perhaps a more lucrative one."

"... I shall do everything in my power to prevent the showing of this Communist-made film in the theaters of America and I am confident that millions of Americans will join in that effort."

Thus it was that Donald L. Jackson told the legislative representatives of the American people, and, through them, the people of the entire world, that we, a group of American citizens, were a threat to the atomic installations at Los Alamos, to the zinc deposits of New Mexico, as part of a secret pro-Soviet apparatus, on the payroll of Moscow, inflaming racial hatreds. If he really believed this why did he not have us arrested? Why did he not subpoena our script?

Congressman Jackson had said that he would do everything in his power to prevent the showing of our film. To succeed he and the studios and Brewer would require one thing: to make the United States their monopoly.

IV

Two weeks later, Congressman Jackson received consent of the House to publish an exchange of letters with various Americans; private citizens and government officials.

From the *Congressional Record* of March 19, 1953:

SUBVERSIVE FILMS

MR. JACKSON. Mr. Speaker. I ask unanimous consent to address the House for 1 minute, to revise and extend my remarks, and to include letters.

THE SPEAKER. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

MR. JACKSON. Mr. Speaker, there has been considerable interest in the House and throughout the country generally with respect to a moving picture being made in Silver City, N. Mex., under the auspices of a number of witnesses who have in the past refused under oath to affirm or deny their alleged membership in the Communist Party.

I have asked all major studios, the Hollywood A.F. of L. Film Council, the Secretaries of State and Commerce, and the Attorney General of the United States to submit suggestions as to what legal steps can be taken, following upon a proper finding that the picture is indeed designed to inflame racial hatreds, toward stopping the export of this picture abroad to the detriment of United States policy and interests abroad.

I wish I could have waited for all of the replies to these inquiries before inserting any in the RECORD.

However, as a member of the Committee on Un-American Activities I am leaving tomorrow for Los Angeles where the committee opens hearings on next Monday. I am inserting those answers which I have received to this time from Roy M. Brewer, chairman, Hollywood A.F. of L. Council, Mr. Howard Hughes, of RKO, the Secretary of Commerce and the in Assistant Secretary of State. I will insert other replies following my return to Washington.

I hope that a legal method can be found by which the completion of this picture in the United States and its export to foreign

nations can be stopped pending a legal finding as to its contents and purposes.

(The letters referred to follow—in part.)

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
MARCH 18, 1953

DONALD L. JACKSON
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Hollywood AFL Film Council assures you that everything which it can do to prevent the showing of the Mexican picture [sic] *Salt of the Earth* will be done.... The film council will solicit its fellow members in the theaters to assist in the prevention of showing of this picture in any American theaters, but the extent to which we can as a union take action such a matter is limited by reason of the restrictive features in the Taft-Hartley Act....

Sincerely,

ROY M. BREWER,
CHAIRMAN, HOLLYWOOD AFL COUNCIL

MARCH 18, 1953

CONGRESSMAN DONALD L. JACKSON
HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C.

DEAR CONGRESSMAN JACKSON:

In your telegram you asked the question, "Is there any action that industry and labor in motion picture field can take to stop completion and release of picture and to prevent showing of film here and abroad?"

My answer is "Yes."

... Before a motion picture can be completed or shown in theaters, an extensive application of certain technical skills and use of a great deal of specialized equipment is absolutely necessary.

Herbert Biberman, Paul Jarrico, and their associates working on this picture do not possess these skills or this equipment.

If the motion picture industry—not only in Hollywood, but throughout the United States—will refuse to apply these skills, will

refuse to furnish this equipment, the picture cannot be completed in this country.

Biberman and Jarrico have already met with refusal where the industry was on its toes. The film processing was being done by the Pathe Laboratories, until the first news broke from Silver City.

But the minute Pathe learned the facts, this alert laboratory immediately refused to do any further work on this picture, even though it meant refunding cash paid in advance.

Investigation fails to disclose where the laboratory work is being done now. But it is being done somewhere, by someone, and a great deal more laboratory work will have to be done by someone, before the motion picture can be completed.

Biberman, Jarrico, and their associates cannot succeed in their scheme alone. Before they can complete the picture, they must have the help of the following:

1. Film laboratories.
2. Suppliers of film.
3. Musicians and recording technicians necessary to record music.
4. Technicians who make dissolves, fades, etc.
5. Owners and operators of sound recording equipment and dubbing rooms.
6. Positive and negative editors and cutters.
7. Laboratories that make release prints.

If the picture industry wants to prevent this motion picture from being completed and spread all over the world as a representative product of the United States, then the industry and particularly that segment of the industry listed above, needs only to do the following.

Be alert to the situation.

Investigate thoroughly each applicant for the use of services or equipment.

Refuse to assist the Bibermans and Jarricos in the making of this picture.

Be on guard against work submitted by dummy corporations or third parties.

Appeal to the Congress and the State Department to act immediately to prevent the export of this film to Mexico or anywhere else.

Sincerely,

HOWARD HUGHES

THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
WASHINGTON, MARCH 16, 1953
THE HONORABLE DONALD L. JACKSON,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, D.C.
DEAR MR. JACKSON:

This is in reply to your letter of February 26, 1953, in which you inquire whether effective legislation exists to prevent the exportation of finished prints of the motion picture *Salt of the Earth*, now in this country.... At the present time, exposed motion picture film is not on our list of controlled commodities.

... I am not expressing an opinion as to whether such action should be taken since, as you are aware, it would necessitate a foreign policy determination with respect to which I should have to obtain advice from the Secretary of State, and possibly the President. It is my understanding that you have already written to Secretary Dulles in this connection, and also that regarding the alien agent aspect of this matter, referred to in your letter, you have written to the Attorney General.

Sincerely yours,

SINCLAIR WEEKS
SECRETARY OF COMMERCE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON, MARCH 18, 1953
THE HONORABLE DONALD L. JACKSON
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MY DEAR DON:

... Section 5b, of the Trading With the Enemy Act, would apparently offer control over the export of any item. The history of this legislation did not contemplate its use as a means of censorship. Its terms, however, are broad and general in nature.... The terms of the Export Control Act... does not indicate that it was designed to enter the field of censorship; but in view of the fact that it covers anything that might affect the foreign policy of the United States....

... In regard to your question relating to the provisions of the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as amended, it would

appear that this is a matter of interpretation and ruling by the Attorney General. This act is administered by the Department of justice, and I am informed that it becomes applicable when it has been determined by the Attorney General that funds are being employed whose source can be traced to a foreign principal.

... I would like to discuss this with you.

Sincerely yours,

THRUSTON B. MORTON
ASSISTANT SECRETARY
(FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE)