

TODD CONTINUED

by King Phumiphon of Thailand, who traveled incognito in the program credits as "Bhumibol."

Going broke for \$1,105,616.78 taught Todd a lesson. He has not touched a playing card in more than seven years, and now when he sees a copy of the *Daily Racing Form* on a newsstand he winces. "Mike's stopped gambling in money," says the veteran Hollywood producer, William Goetz, an old friend, "but he's still a big gambler in ideas."

His current idea-gamble is based on his five-year franchise from Magna to make two Todd-AO pictures a year. This week a camera unit is heading for Bali and India to make background shots for Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*, which Todd wants to have ready when the human race has tired of *Oklahoma!* even in Todd-AO. However, his heaviest bet for 1955, estimated at \$7.5 million, is Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, which he hopes to shoot in Yugoslavia with the cooperation of the Tito government.

Almost since the birth of the movies producers have been talking about doing *War and Peace*, but it took Mike Todd, probably the greatest catalytic agent in world show business today, to start doing something about it. Last year he got a huge jump on fellow showmen by not only initiating a deal with Yugoslavia for its army and its scenery, but signing up Pulitzer prize-winner Robert Sherwood to dramatize the epic and Fred Zinneman, currently the most sought-after director in Hollywood, to direct it. Sherwood is now well along with the script and plans to go to Yugoslavia in May to inspect the terrain. Zinneman will start shooting exteriors, including the battle scenes and the burning of Moscow, in the fall. According to scuttlebutt the cast will include Sir Laurence Olivier as Pierre, Montgomery Clift as Andrey, Audrey Hepburn as Natasha and Spencer Tracy as General Kutusov. Extras in the military and agricultural scenes will of course be played by the Yugoslav army and peasantry. One of Todd's milder comments on his truly colossal undertaking is, "Think of the service it'll perform for all of the guys who started the book and wondered how it finally turned out."

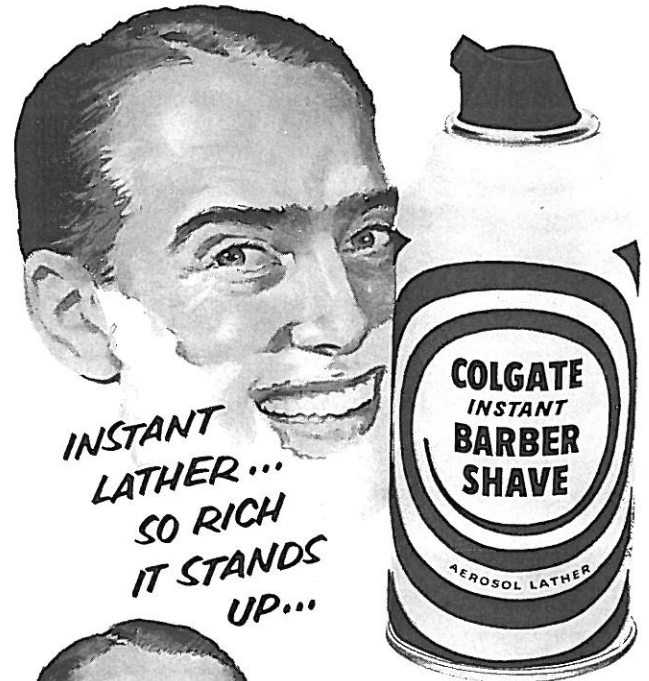
For a while the making of *War and Peace* threatened to become an international cinematic derby. Independent Producer Sam Spiegel claimed that he had been "ordained" to produce it. Sir Alexander Korda announced that he had devoted 12 years to its preparation. David Selznick and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer had the title rights registered with the Motion Picture Producers' Association of America. These three entries now seem to have been scratched, but the Italian combine of Carlo Ponti and Dino De Laurentiis insist that they still plan to compete, aided by Paramount's financing and its VistaVision process. Finally, Radio Moscow recently and cryptically announced that a version of *War and Peace* would be shot in the Soviet Union.

Mike Todd remains unperturbed by all this. It reminds him of the old days when three all-Negro jazz versions of *The Mikado* were running in New York simultaneously. "I took on the WPA, didn't I?" he says. "What's Italians? What's Russians? Todd-AO will make bums of 'em all."



ALWAYS AT WORK, Todd juggles dollar cigar and telephones that are with him almost everywhere, even on the terrace of his duplex Park Avenue penthouse. Holding a couple of phone conversations at once is par for Todd.

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