

May 8, 1956

## It's Okay With State Dept. If Mike Todd Makes Pix With Or Sells 'Em To Soviet

Washington, May 8. — The State Department sees no reason why Mike Todd, or anyone else shouldn't sell pictures behind the Iron Curtain, a spokesman told DAILY VARIETY today.

The comment was in reply to a query on Mike Todd's Moscow press conference, last Saturday, at which he announced that the world preem for his "Around the World In 80 Days" will be held in Moscow next November.

At the same meeting with newsmen, Todd said he was finalizing a deal to co-produce five films with Russian producers within the next five years. He said he would supply part of the cash, with the rest from the Soviet Government.

No American producer has entered into joint production with anyone behind the Iron Curtain. The State Department stated that "while it is precedent setting, it is perfectly legal for him to do so."

If American producers should come to the State Department for advice on such co-production, it was explained, "each individual case would be handled on its merits. Whenever anybody has a particular deal," said the department spokesman, "we are glad to discuss the pros and cons with him. Mr. Todd did visit the State Dept. in April, but did not discuss co-production."

"When such discussions are held with American businessmen, we try to advise them on what is for the best interest of the government, and for their own best interests. However, there is no law to prevent them from making a deal of this kind without consulting us."

On the matter of selling American films to the Soviet Union, the department official said:

"For some time, the department has felt there is no reason why American pictures shouldn't be shown on the other side of the Iron Curtain."

### NY Reaction—Awe

New York, May 8.—A mixture of awe and amusement characterized NY film industry execs' reaction this week to the reported Mike Todd deal to co-produce five films with the Soviets.

While many commented on the promotional potential of such pix, others thought, in the supercritical climate, that Todd was going way out on a limb. Few believe that he'll make "War and Peace" in light of the Paramount version.

May 9, 1956

## Mike Todd 'Can't Figure It' In Rubles, But Says 'War' Will Cost \$25,000,000

New York, May 9.—Mike Todd donned striped pants and a cut-away coat tonight to level a blast at the State Department for its contention, reported in DAILY VARIETY's story today, that he had never consulted with them on his Russian co-production plans. On the contrary, the producer fumed, "they knew of it every step of the way."

Todd, never a man to mince words, declared categorically that U.S. Ambassador Charles (Chip) Bohlen (though skeptical of Todd's success in making a Soviet deal) had been kept fully informed of the progress of the negotiations.

Actually, Todd revealed, there were two deals made. One involves a swap of "Around the World In 80 Days" for a pair of Russian features which Todd will handle here. The other, which ties in, is a co-production venture of five Todd-AO films which will come out of Todd's Magna franchise for 10 pix in the wide screen process.

"How much do you think I would have gotten from the Russians for '80 Days' if I'd sold it to them?" he asked.

First co-production venture, a survey of Soviet entertainment, rolls next month, and Todd is sending a crew of nine, including four Americans, to Moscow in three weeks. He'll personally direct the Eastman Color initialer. He expects to invest \$500,000 as his share in the musical, and the Russians will invest the rest in rubles and talent. Todd is cabling Moscow tonight to confirm the deal, but with reservations on "War and Peace," on which he insists he must retain "artistic control." If "War" isn't made, the deal is still good.

On the other hand, if the Soviets don't agree Todd should have artistic control, they'll make "War" themselves and he may handle it outside the Soviet orbit. The proceeds from the entire project would be split, with Todd keeping all monies outside the Soviet and their satellites, and the Russians keeping their share, even though this may be disproportionate to the actual investments.

Definition of "orbit" is only still in doubt in the cases of Yugoslavia and India.

Todd will equip a Moscow theatre, and possibly a Leningrad house as well, with Todd-AO, with projectors sent from Holland. He confirmed that "80 Days" will have a November 15 premiere in Moscow, with subsequent distribution throughout the Soviet orbit, making it the first American entry since the war.

Todd estimated that his investment in "War and Peace" could be between \$2,500,000 and \$3,000,000, with the Soviets putting in many times that amount.

"You can't figure it in the ruble exchange," he declared, "but it should cost \$25,000,000."

He insisted the film would have to be exactly like the Tolstoy classic. The Russians, he added, have not yet seen the Robert Sherwood treatment.

Todd said the co-production deals would require separate negatives for the U.S. and non-Red countries. Russians, he added, were extremely cooperative and seem interested in "anything American."

Producer, who heads for the Coast tonight, said he had already received a few crackpot letters in connection with his Soviet tie.