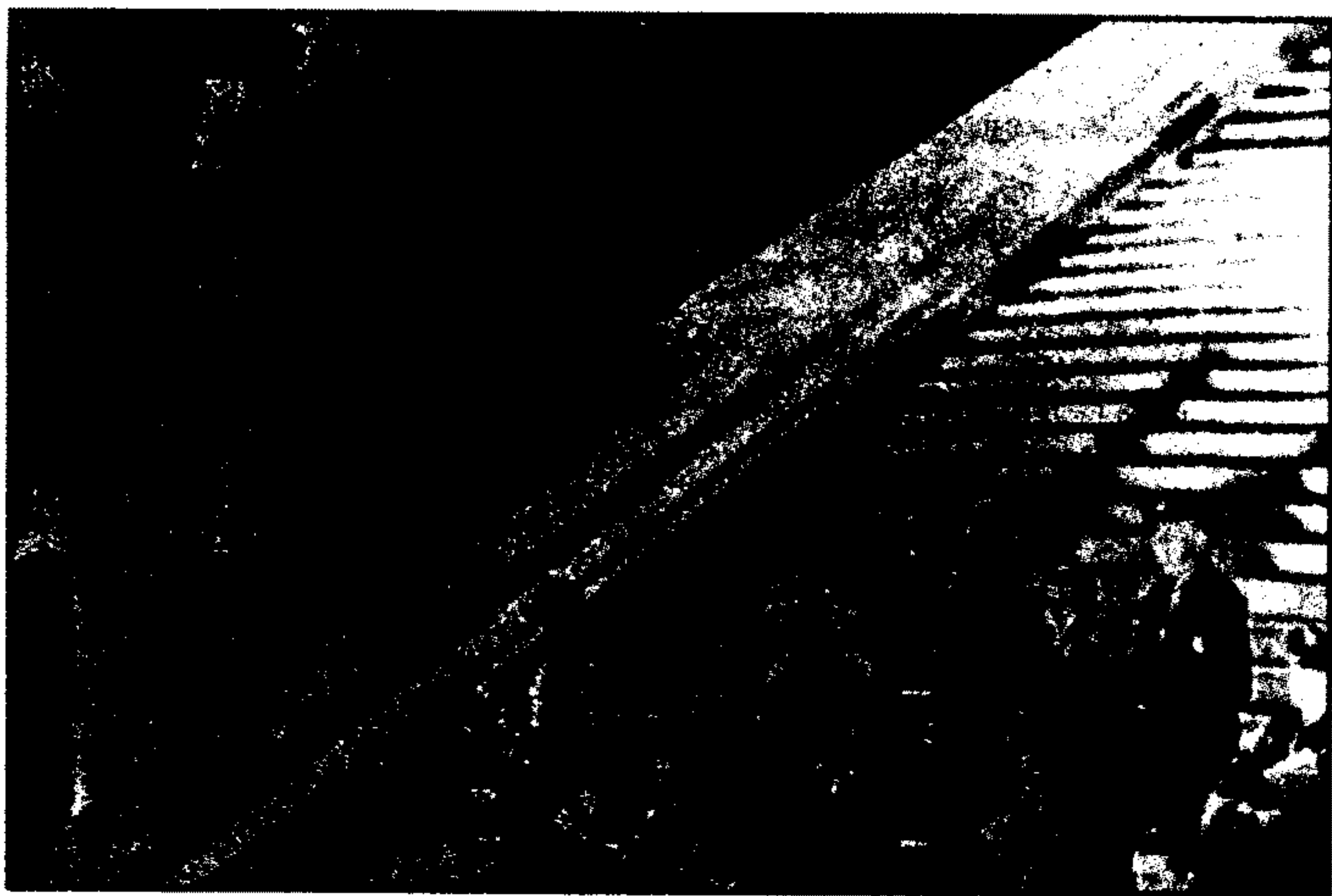


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## Powell & Pressburger at War



### A Matter of Life and Death

**Great Britain, 1946, 104 minutes**

**Director:** Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger

**Cast:** David Niven, Kim Hunter, Roger Livesey, Raymond Massey, Marius Goring

**Producer/Screenplay:** Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger

**Cinematographer:** Jack Cardiff **Editor:** Reginald Mills **Music:** Allan Gray

**Production Company:** The Archers **Print Source:** Piper-Heidsieck Classic Film Collection

"One of Powell and Pressburger's finest films. Made at the instigation of the Ministry of Information, which wanted propaganda stressing the need for goodwill between Britain and America, it emerges as an outrageous fantasy full of wit, beautiful sets and Technicolour, and perfectly judged performances. The story is just a little bizarre. RAF pilot Niven bales out of his blazing plane without a chute and survives; but—at least in his tormented mind—he was due to die, and a heavenly messenger comes down to earth to collect him. A celestial tribunal ensues to judge his case while, back on earth, doctors are fighting for his life. What makes the film so very remarkable is the assurance of Powell's direction, which manages to make heaven at least as convincing as earth. (The celestial scenes are in monochrome, the terrestrial ones in colour; was Powell slyly asserting, in the faces of the British documentary boys, the greater realism of that which is imagined?) But the whole thing works like a dream, with many hilarious swipes at national stereotypes, and a love story that is as moving as it is absurd."—Geoff Andrew, *The Time Out Film Guide*

"For me, *A Matter of Life and Death* is the most perfect film: the technical perfection and the fact that it is a most wonderful conjuring trick to get handed ... The film was actually started by the Ministry of Information [which declared], 'We think you should make a film about Anglo-American relations because they are deteriorating.' Of course, they didn't know we would come up with *A Matter of Life and Death*." —Michael Powell