Undistilled ethnic stories in British films, and especially in the 30's and 40's, are virtually non-existent. (In the 50's, from Carol Reed's "A Kid for Two Farthings" on, they became a little more frequent). This was not due to any racial prejudices, but rather I suspect to a curious combination of subdued snobbery plus a reticence to invade privacy... clearly a rationale that needs investigation with far more space than we have here. In any event, tonight's two films do offer unique examples of Jewish-oriented stories that in America formed virtually a sub-genre.

MR COHEN TAKES A WALK (Warner Brothers—British, 1935) Directed by William Beaudine; Produced by Irving Asher; Screenplay by Brock Williams from an original story by Mary Roberts Rinehart; Camera, Basil Emmett; 81 mins. (Note: print bears the US tv title "Father Takes a Walk," although to my knowledge it has had no television exposure at all).

With: Jack Cohen (Jake Cohen); Violet Farbrook (Rachel Cohen); Chili Bouchier (Julia Levine); Barry Lieby (Joe Levine); Nickie Brantford (Jack Cohen); Ralph Truman (Sam Cohen); Meriel Forbes (Sally O'Connor); George Magee (Pat O'Connor); Kenneth Villiers (Bob West); Elliot Makeham (country storekeeper).

One of the many enjoyable programmers that Warners made in England in the 30's, often as in this case with an American director to give it more style and expertise than the average small British film could achieve, "Mr. Cohen Takes A Walk" was a surprise success, both critically and with the public. It's a pity that the titular walk doesn't get under way a little earlier, because the film gets a real lift when it gets outdoors, but that's a minor complaint. Presumably, since it is "from" a Mary Roberts Rinehart story and is set as an American story originally bought for George Arliss, but someone must have thought it would naturally soar it was to Arliss' "The Working Man" and quashed it. The surprising thing is that Warners didn't just take "The Working Man" and re-work that, since it was common for them to re-dress even such typically American properties as "Border Town" into fodder for their British studios, Anyway, with its roots in both Arliss and "One Hour of Happiness" ("Mr. Cohen Takes A Walk" not only has a great deal of charm and gentility, but also a successful three-star starring vehicle — the only one he ever had in Britain or Hollywood — for that matter — Paul Graetz). Incidentally, the musical score is a little aggressive and perhaps a bit monotonic in its usual use of ethnic musical themes — although there's a big burst of Bussy Berkeley for the End title! Coincidentally, like "Mr. Emmanuel", it was shot at suburban London studios in Teddington, and most of the big store interiors (and a few exterior) were taken at the Bentall's Department Store in nearby Kingston-on-Thames.

Ten Minute Intermission —

MR EMMANUEL (Rank/Eagle Lion, 1944) Directed by Harold French; produced by William Sistrom for Two Cities Films; Screenplay by Louis Golding and Gordon Wellesley from the novel by Golding; Camera, Otto Heller; Musical score by Ron Goodwin; original running time 97 mins.; U.S. running time (for 1946 United Artists release, 90 mins).

With: Felix Ayler (Mr Emmanuel); Greta Gynt (Elise Silver); Walter Rilla (Willi Brockenberg); Peter Mullins (Bruno); Ursula Jeans (Frau Heinke); Elisabeth Marsh (Rose Cooper); Frederick Richter (Heinke); Maria Berger (Frau Kahn); Charles Goldner (Secretary); Irene Handl (Trude); Meier Zelnick (Silver); Arnold Marie Kahn); Jean Simmons (Sally Cooper); Pamela White (Jane Cooper); Eric Freud (Austrian officer); Norman Pierse (Mr. Cooper); Warren Lister (Dickie Cooper) and Margaret Vyner, Guy Dugby, Ivan Deley, Neil Ballantyne.

It's a pity, for purposes of our programming tonight, that this film wasn't titled "Mr. Emmanuel Takes a Trip"; it would have been appropriate, but of course much to light and comedic a title for the story being told. Today (though the film is little remembered) it may have extra interest in being an early essay in "holocaust" themes, although it of course does not have the power of the much earlier (and inexplicably even more ignored) "Pastor Hall". Somewhat similar in spirit to the old "Scarlet Pimpernel" stories, though without the derring-do and action that is typically glossy film to come out of a small studio, and like its co-feature, gives its cast a real validity for a lead. It's one of the few British films of the war years to really express passion and outrage against the Nazis. As written, Emmanuel is possibly a trifle too naive and trusting, and unfamiliar with the "problems" of putting Jewish characters on the screen, the film perhaps overdoes the stress on gentility and humanity. (American films like "Schindler's List" the stress were much more successful in presenting those qualities in Jewish characters within the different ethnic background at the same time).

However, Harold French was merely a journeyman director who made a number of films, mainly comedies, but who was never particularly creative or subtle; this was probably his most important film. The supporting cast is full of interesting refugee actors, Frederick Richter making a particularly vicious Nazi, and one notes the gentle charm and grace of up-and-coming Jean Simmons. Goering and Himmler are in for effective natch for choppin'. Our print is of the American and slightly cut version; the seven minutes of trims are all playfully portions (the meeting of the coming home father at the docks, and the removal of some sections concerning the boy's attempted suicide). They're regrettable but not particularly harmful, and subsequent dialogue covers the missing footage.

—William K. Everson