TWO SWISS FILMS

GUILLAUME TELL (Swiss/German, 1933-34) A Terra-Film Production; produced by Ralph Scotoni; Directed by Hans Paul; Scenario by Heinz Paul, Hanns Johst, Dr. Hans Oetjel and Wilhelm Stoppler, inspired by writings by Friedrich Schiller and the novel "Der Knabe des Tellen" by Gottfried Keller; Camera, Sepp Allgeier, Franz Weihmayer, Josef Dehinden; Music, Herbert Winti; Produced with the cooperation of the National Museum, Zurich; Original German version, 99 minutes; English version, "The Legend of William Tell"; 65 mins, completed in 1935 and co-directed by H. Manning Hayes; Our version tonight is of the English edition, but under its American wartime reissue title of "They'll Never Surrender." NY premiere, 25th Street Playhouse; Norman Vaidt (Gessler); Dolfis Willecke (Walter Tell); Emmy Sonneman (Frau Tell); Edmond Willard (Walter Fuert); Dennis Aubrey (Werner Stauftacher); Charles Callum (Arnold Malchoth); Werner Schott (Laudenberger)

Notes:Edmond Willard's role in the German original was played by Fritz Hofbrauer; Dennis Aubrey's by Theodor Loos. Emmy Sonneman, who plays Tell's wife, later married Hermann Goering. There is little point in listing the whole cast of the original German version since many of these characters and players do not appear in the much edited British version, but a copy of the full cast will be displayed at the rear of the auditorium for those interested.

Switzerland has made almost as many films about William Tell as America has about Abraham Lincoln and Billy the Kid. This particular version was made by Terra-Film, a Nazi front, and in the original German Tell version was given to mounting a great many unlikely Hitler philosophies. In its full version, it was apparently quite anti-Semitic and anti-English, but even with the dubbing and a few well-matched scenes with lesser English players, leaves a great deal to be desired. It seems disjointed, which is understandable given the massive editing, but it also seems totally lacking in fire and passion, which - if it had been there in the first place - would certainly have survived all that cutting. No little of the problem may be the totally uncharismatic persons of Hans Marr who plays Tell; one wonders what fire Luis Trenker might have brought to the role, especially if he'd directed it too, bearing in mind his very similar Tell! The English version later started a version, but the money ran out and it was never completed). The film is elaborately enough mounted, but the impressive array of writers and historians involved suggests a little too much concern with surface accuracy and not enough with drama. There is never any sense of real rebellion, and if it weren't for Conrad Veidt, not too much sense of real tyranny either, and the final big battle scene, while it is quite spacially staged, is really no more exciting than the traditional climax of the average Western. On the other hand, the music of Herbert Winti (who also scored the Olympiad film and the stunning photography of lakes, mountains and meadows in early morning mist make the film a musical and pictorial treat. In its present form it's no more than a fascinating oddity, but Veidt's presence and the visuals command attention thoroughly. Far more dramatic than the film itself is the parallel story of Veidt's problems when the film was completed. He was due to go back to England to start "Jew Suss" for Gaumont British. The Nazis (a) wanted him to return to German films, and if he wouldn't agree to that, to (b) at least refuse to make "Jew Suss". When he refused both suggestions he was taken into "protective custody" and all his political associates were given no contact with him, and his British associates. The word was put out that he was too sick even to travel. Michael Balcon finally sent a doctor over to repudiate this latter claim. Hitler and Goebbels were adamant about hanging on to Veidt until he changed his mind; it was Ribbentrop who intervened, pointing out the negative effects that their stand would create, greater probably than the damage done by "Jew Suss", which wouldn't be shown in a British cinema.

--- Ten Minute Intermission ---

IT HAPPENED IN BROAD DAYLIGHT (Spanish/German, 1958) Produced by Lazar Wechsler and Artur Brauner for Fraessens-Film, Zurich; Directed by Ladislav Vajda; Screenplay by Vajda, Fredrich Durrenmatt, Hans Jacoby from an original story by Durrenmatt, later reissued as a novel, "Der Versprechen! Requiem auf den Kriminalroman"; Camera, Heinrich Gartner; Music, Bruno Canfora; 100 mins; NY premiere in 1960 at the Baronet Theatre. With: Hein Sommer (Inspector Heiland); Begie Dryson (Kloster); Hans Michel (Jacqueler); Gert Frobenius (Secretary); Maria Donatzen (Mrs. Schratt); Anita von Ular (Mrs. Schratt); Maria Ros Salgado (Mrs. Haller); Siegfried Lovitz (Inspector), Hans Gugler (Moser); Magrit Winter (Mrs. Moser); Annabelle Betschart (schoolteacher), Barbara Haller (Ursula)

It is a cultural crime that this film, by Switzerland's top producer, and from an always interesting and off-beat director, should be released in this country only in a very casually dubbed version. It is the story of Micahel Heiland (Kloster), who, according to the minute script writers, is a man who believes in justice. He is uninterested in the theory that it was a thriller first and an art-house picture second, and would reach a wider audience that way. (It didn't). Comparison with Fritz Lang's "M" is unavoidable and interesting, the search for a child murderer taking place not in a gloomy expressionistic underworld but in the sunlit meadows and forests of Switzerland. After several viewings, one grows accustomed to the dubbing, but it does lessen the impact of a very fine film. Nevertheless, it's all we're ever likely to have now.

--- William K. Everson

Program ends 10.35 a.m. Short discussion period follows

Bernhard Mayer August 1960