

The Life and Death of Uncle Tigna

TO LIVE IN PEACE

(Lux Film)

TO Live in Peace is not the finest film that I have seen but it had a casual beauty which pleased me more than anything art or craft alone could have contrived, it had moments of profound feeling and significance, and I cannot recall any motion picture which, in recollection, offered a more profitable field for speculation and argument.

Inevitably it invites comparison and contrast with *Open City*. Both are products of the renaissance Italian cinema; both are "war" films; in both the central role is played by Aldo Fabrizi, once a smalltime vaudeville comedian and now acknowledged as one of the finest character actors in Europe. If one adds that in each case the dialogue is in Italian, and that the sub-titling is indifferent (but almost unnecessary), the list of similarities is about exhausted. In theme, in spirit, and in treatment the difference between the two films is fundamental.

Open City was a film of swift, complex and violent action, but the complexities were on the surface. The theme

BAROMETER
FINE: "To Live in Peace."
MAINLY FAIR: "City Across the River."
DULL: "The Bribe."

—revolt against tyranny, the matching of violence with violence, sabotage and torture, betrayal and retribution—was relatively uncomplicated. *To Live in Peace* is on the surface a deceptively simple story. It is rural in setting and moves for the most part to the slow tempo of the seasons but the theme is not one which can be expressed in anything so transient as a political concept.

Uncle Tigna (Aldo Fabrizi) is a farmer. In the valleys below the tiny upland village where he lives the war ebbs and flows and does not greatly concern him. True, he has a nephew and niece billeted under his roof, and there is a solitary German soldier stationed in the village, but neither circumstance represents any serious imposition on his good nature. The children he spoils, as uncles do; the Wehrmacht representative, who is a fairly inoffensive specimen, he treats with a nice blend of tolerance and indifference. Life moves, in any case, as it always had

done. His cows calve, his crops ripen, and the grapes come to the wine-press in their season.

Then one morning he discovers two Americans, escaped P.O.W.'s, in his barn. One of them, a negro, is wounded, and common humanity (of which Uncle Tigna has more than his share) demands that the fugitives be succoured and concealed. Treated by the village doctor (a partisan to whom Uncle Tigna extends the same genial attention as he accords to the local Fascist Party secretary), the negro recovers and is just ready for the road when the German pays an unexpected evening visit. The American is hustled into the wine-cellar where he proceeds to get roaring drunk. In the kitchen Uncle Tigna plies the German with drink until he, too, can hardly stand. In a climactic moment the two soldiers come face to face.



ALDO FABRIZI
 "Seedtime and harvest shall not cease"

For a long minute there is utter silence then, each convinced that the war must be over, they fall whooping on one another's necks. Reeling down the street full of their brave new world, they wake the entire village to a general rejoicing. Then the cold night air

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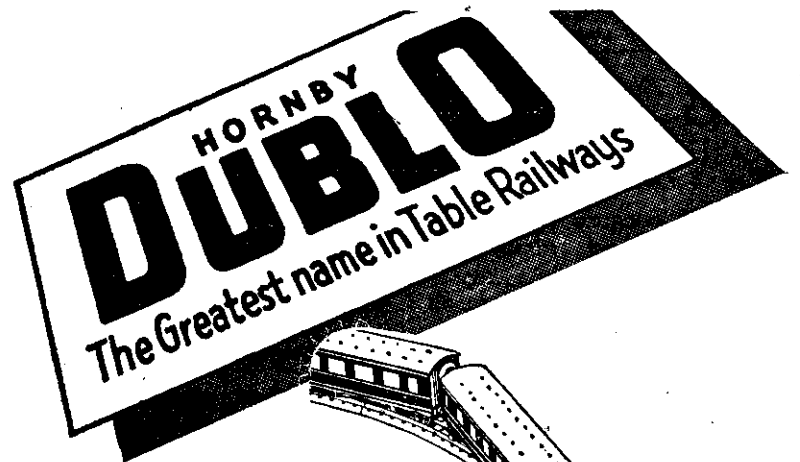
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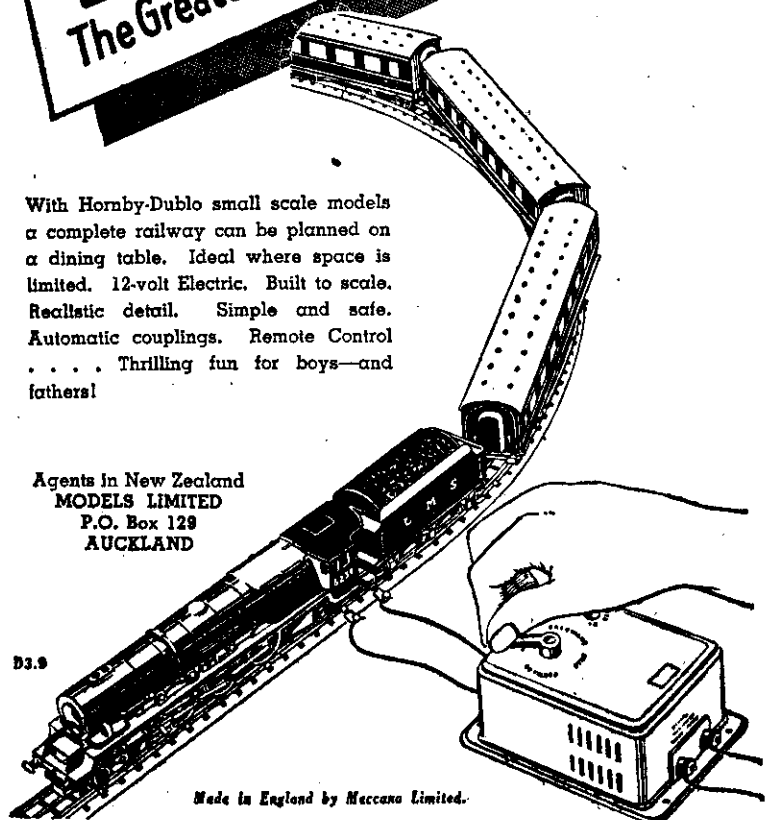
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