

Children of Our Time

THE MAN BETWEEN

(London Films)

THE *THIRD MAN* is the standard by which many people judge the work of Carol Reed, but even if it were not so it would be impossible to ignore that film in reviewing his new one. Here is a city—Berlin this time—divided by a frontier between East and West; a visitor knowing nothing of its intrigue who is to become almost as deeply involved as Holly Martins; a central character who has been corrupted by the times; cafés and a hint of a haunting tune; and so on. Even the title sounds not unfamiliar. And as if that were not enough, there is an echo also of Sir Carol's last film, *Outcast of the Islands*: an ever-watchful boy—but on a bicycle, not in a canoe. This is not, in fact, Carol Reed's most original piece; and even if he had not made *The Third Man* there would be room to criticise its Berlin successor. Yet I confess that, realising all this, I sat through *The Man Between* half the time under the influence of a sort of spell cast by this fine artist-craftsman of the cinema. So much, I felt sure, was due to the manner in which the story is told.

BAROMETER

FAIR TO FINE: "The Man Between."
FAIR TO FINE: "The Juggler."

The visitor this time is a young innocent, Susanne (Claire Bloom), come to spend a few weeks with her brother, a British Army doctor (Geoffrey Toone) and his German wife, Bettina (Hildegard Neff). On a visit to the Eastern sector, Susanne meets a "friend" of Bettina, Ivo Kern (James Mason), who, as it happens, is working for the Russians; and the story turns mainly on the relations between him and Susanne. The boy on the bicycle, a spy for Ivo, is one of the film's most effective touches—his weaving, swooping progress as he appears again and again (like one of those musical themes that seem to get at the nerve ends) has, cumulatively, almost hypnotic power. Similarly effective is the director's use of quickly alternating shots—to point up the sinister entrance, for instance, of Ivo's boss, Halendar (Aribert Waescher), or in the wonderful kidnapping sequence, when the crunch of a car's tyres in the snow and the groan of the windscreen wiper are heard as the film cuts back and forth between the kidnapper's car seen by the victim and the snowbound street seen from

within the car. All this is extraordinarily good as far as it goes, and gives the first part of the film an unforgettable tempo; but it seems to me that this is not well maintained through the middle section. It picks up again shortly before the end. The music throughout does all that it should.

Of the women, Miss Neff is the most impressive; though in an uneven performance Miss Bloom has her moments—when she finds, for example, that Ivo isn't going to fall into a trap set for him. Mr. Mason is better than I have seen him for some time, and of the less well-known players Aribert Waescher is the most effective. But when everything has been said about the acting, this remains a director's film.

None of the characterisation in *The Man Between* goes really deep, as I realised especially after seeing on the same day the film I review below. Because of this (and perhaps also be-



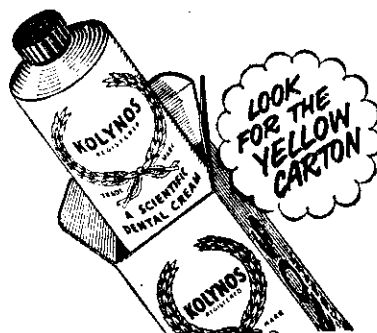
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