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For ten years, Sjöberg worked in the theatre. One suspects that he despised the frivolous films of the thirties, and found that he could experiment more profitably on the stage. He was acutely conscious of the dangers of Hitlerism, and when he did return to the cinema he made a resolutely pacifist film. *They Staked their Lives* (Med livet som

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insats, 1939) was completed just after the outbreak of the second world war, and received its Stockholm premiere in January, 1940. Its theme, dealing with individuals caught up in a net of power and intrigue against their wishes, is typical of Sjöberg's later works, especially of *Only a Mother* and *Wild Birds*. The leading characters are members of an underground movement in an unnamed Baltic country that is clearly a police state. The frequent quarrels among the agents, and the gloomy gatherings in bare rooms emphasise Sjöberg's fatalism and the perplexities of a Europe drifting inexorably into war. One finds the same measure of disillusionment in Carné's *Quai des Brumes* and *Le Jour Se Lève* (Aino Taube as the heroine wears a Michèle Morgan-type raincoat), and in Graham Greene's books of the period, such as *A Gun for Sale* and *The Confidential Agent*. But Sjöberg, for all his years in the theatre, reveals himself a master not only at composing his shots, but also at asserting the rhythm of the film. Bursts of movement contrast with moments of stillness and thus describe the punctuated lives of the people in the film. Bitter, recriminating conversations are followed by swift action, and the final episode, showing Max laying a smoke-screen round the lake, is cut with magnificent assurance. Human relationships begin to matter again in the Swedish cinema after a decade of levity and false emotion. At the same time Anders Henrikson was directing *A Crime* along similar lines.