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The Assignment

(SWEDISH-COLOR)

Variety 5-25-77
Cannes, May 19.

A Nordisk Tonefilm/AB Svensk Filmin-
dustri/Swedish Film Institute production,
Film Institute (Aina Bellis) release.
Directed by Mats Arehn. Screenplay, Lars
Magnus Jansson, Ingemar Ejve, Mats
Arehn, based on Per Wahloo novel; dia-
logue translation into English and assistant
director, George Bisset; camera (East-
mancolor), Lennart Carlsson; editor, Inge-
mar Ejve; executive producer, Ejve;
music, Allan Petterson's 7th Symphony;
costumes, Ulla Britt Soederlund. Reviewed
at Cinema Le Regent in Swedish Cannes
Festival series, May 18, '77. Running time,
97 MINS.

The diplomat Thomas Hellberg
The police captain . Christopher Plummer
The secretary Carolyn Seymour
The factory owner Fernando Rey
The doctor Per Oscarsson
(*English Soundtrack*)

"The Assignment" is an all-Swedish production, shot entirely in English. Even in Sweden, where picture does not open until September, audiences will see it in a Swedish-subtitled version. The producers, aiming for world-wide sales from the outset, are sure to be rewarded for their gamble, since this product has polish, verve and intelligence as a political thriller of the first rank. Use of non-Swedish marquee names will also help.

Producer-editor-writer Inge-
mar Ejve and director Mats Arehn
used a fairly big budget and took
their time (nearly three months of
Portuguese location shooting) to
make sure that their feature got a
truly international look. Story is
based on an early novel by Per
Wahloo (of Wahloo-Sjowall police
thrillers fame) about a young
Swedish diplomat sent to a vio-
lence-torn latin American state as
mediator. From the moment of his
arrival, it is clear that everybody
distrusts him and most want him
killed.

Remembering the fate of Swed-
en's Folke Bernadotte in Jeru-
salem, "The Assignment" has a
true ring from the start. The medi-
ator, played as a man of civil cour-
age in spite of obvious fear by Tho-
mas Hellberg, asserts his author-
ity, what little he has, over such
warring parties as a police captain
(Christopher Plummer is an
excellently nuanced portrait of
villany), the local Mr. Big (Fer-
nando Rey without much to do) and
the Liberation Front leader, a
village doctor (Per Oscarsson doing
his tortured humanity bit) and
others. Carolyn Seymour as the
mediator's secretary supplies a
coolly sensual presence.

A showdown leads to a definitely
downbeat ending that won't send
audiences away happy. The
mediator has done his best, but the
best was not good enough under the
circumstances. Film, fortunately,
preaches no moral, but in its mix of
solid little chills and thrills, it
features both tender compassion,
rage against injustice and a lot of
subdued humor. —*Kell.*