



Fred Zinnemann
and
*A MAN
FOR ALL SEASONS*



On Monday 31 October 1983, at Amersham, about 15 miles from London, Paul Scofield and two fellow-actors were injured in a stagecoach accident. The *International Herald Tribune* of 2 November (p. 16), reporting on the accident, gives us Scofield's age, 61, and singles out one page from his eventful career : 'winner of an Oscar for his role in « A Man for All Seasons »'. Such is the prestige of that oscar-studded film, directed in 1966 by Fred Zinnemann, six years after the first staging of Robert Bolt's play (London, 1 July 1960). As Marialisa Bertagnoni writes in *Moreana* 17 (Feb. 1968), the apprehension felt by many at the news of a film on More subsided when they heard that the director

was entrusting the script to Bolt and the title-role to Scofield : three men determined « to capture the enthralling man who captured them ». She praises the trio for catching the « rigorosa essenzialità » of the hero. « There was something in Zinnemann's established vein that came close to More's personality », and she reckons that all changes in the text of the dialogue make for a truer portrait. Other commentators in our bulletin -- Henri Queffélec, Henri Meulon, Gilberto Storari, E.E. Reynolds -- agree that, despite the film-maker's inevitable departures from historical detail, the voice of his Thomas More rings true, and is recognized at once by those familiar with his life and works. The forthcoming Index of *Moreana* 1963-83 will show how often *A Man for All Seasons* has visited our journal. Erudite notes have concerned that very phrase, its Latin original *omnium horarum homo* and Erasmus' repeated use of it to characterize his London friend. The phrase became proverbial as the drama moved from stage to screen, and continued its triumphant career by way of television and videoscope. The pattern has proved endlessly prolific at the hands of publicists, yielding « foods for all seasons » and « the bank for all reasons » and « a saint for this season » to quote but three out of countless variations or parodies. It appears that the Italian rendering *un uomo per tutti le stagioni*, used by Dott. Bertagnoni in her version of Bolt's drama, has likewise grown into a catchphrase. *Moreana* also echoed the judgments of cinema critics and other journalists by culling snippets from scores of magazines, newspapers and learned journals, including Moscow's *Pravda*.

And yet there was little contact between our (rather academic) Association and the masters of the Seventh Art. Fred Zinnemann was too busy creating other films, which took him to various parts of the world. In 1980, Normand Poirier asked me to send him a copy of *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, which led to our second bout of correspondence. In April 1982, I spoke of More at Assumption College, Worcester, Mass., and was much befriended by its Chancellor, the Rev. Wilfrid Dufault, A.A., who, living in Rome in the late 1950s as Superior General of his Congregation, had provided the religious counsel and connections for *The Nun's Story*. Father finds the film better than the book, by Katherine Hulme, thanks to the director's thoughtful reverence as well as extraordinary skill. The lasting friendship which developed between « Fred » and « Wilfrid » out of that cooperation encouraged me to meet the Austrian born « cinéaste », trained in Paris, after having enjoyed the warm welcome of the North-American priest. On Friday 12 August 1983, I obtruded myself on Fred and his English wife Renée, and spent two delightful hours in their London apartment where Elizabeth McCutcheon joined me. (Our evening was earmarked for a « working » supper with Rosemary Rendel). On the sofas, some cushions of Mrs. Zinnemann's making conjure up various films of her husband's : one shows the back of Scofield-More, starkly outlined in his Tudor hat and short cape ; another evokes *From Here to Eternity*.

All of *A Man for All Seasons* was filmed in England, though in more than one place : the « Great House » of Chelsea was an old abbey in Oxfordshire, and the tidal river which does such beautiful duty for the Thames, and plays such a vital role in the film, is a privately owned water in verdant Hampshire. The wall on the fluvial edge of More's estate had therefore to be built in both locations. This wall, with the steps which lead to the mooring spot, looms large in the behind-the-scenes photographs which our Angers archives owe to the director's generosity. The prints we reproduce bring us vivid flashes of the sixteen hectic months in 1965 and 1966 during which Zinnemann and his team worked out the masterpiece destined to reap them, in the words of a film reviewer, « Oscars for all reasons ». They speak for themselves : whoever saw the film will easily recognize not only More-Scofield, but also Richard Rich - John Hurt, Cardinal Wolsey - Orson Welles, Henry VIII - Robert Shaw. More importantly, one senses how stimulating, and at times exhilarating, it must have been to work under such a director.

Germain MARC'HADOUR



Yours sincerely,

Fred Zinnemann

FRED ZINNE MANN



