

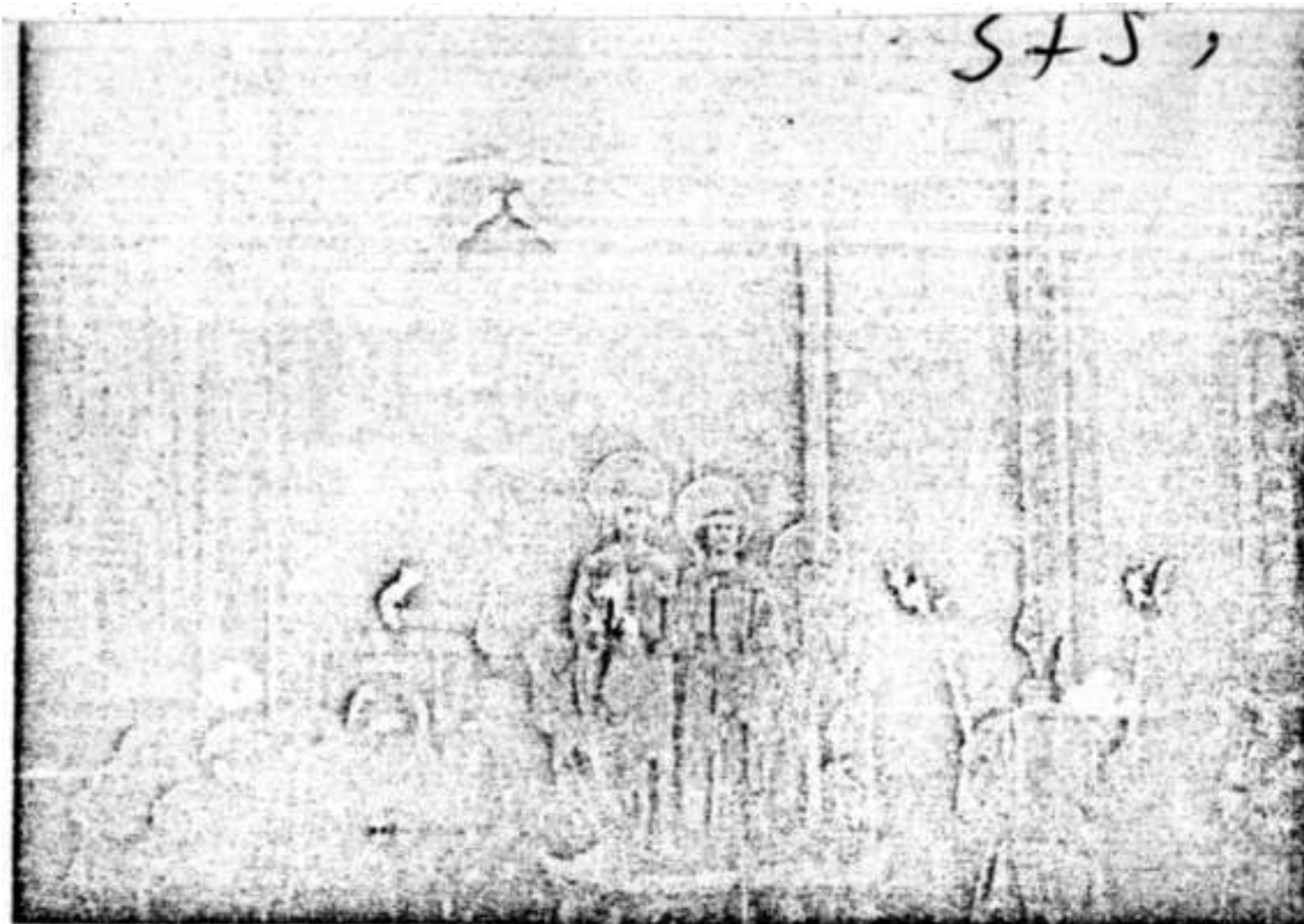
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# IVAN THE TERRIBLE part two

by B. D. GARGA

Although the first part of Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* is well-known, Part II has never been publically shown in Russia and remains unknown in the West. Eisenstein designed the film from beginning to end, and this article is illustrated with some of his sketches. Right: Ivan in the Ouspensky Cathedral. Above: the same set, showing the miracle play.



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WORK on the first Indo-Soviet co-production, *Across the Three Seas*, took me last year to the Soviet Union. This film, directed by K. Abbas and V. Pronin, is about the Russian traveller Afanasi Nikitin, who went to India in the fifteenth century, preceding Vasco da Gama by about twenty years. I stayed in the Soviet Union for eight months, and worked in the Mosfilm Studios, where such masters of the film as Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Dovzhenko had once worked. Today the traditions of the studio are carried on by directors like Romm, Roshal, Chukrai, Alexandrof, Pyrieff and Yutkevitch. As a member of the Mosfilm family, even for so short a period, I was able to study Soviet cinema at close quarters, and to share something of the excitement of grey-facaded Moscow's artistic world. The current controversy was Kalatozov's extraordinary and striking *The Cranes Are Flying*; the current objects of admiration were Roshal's *The Sisters* (after Alexei Tolstoi's novel *The Road to Calvary*) and Gerasimov's vivid version of Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don*.

For me, however, the greatest reward was to see the Second Part of *Ivan The Terrible*—the banned masterpiece which has become a legend. It was a dream come true. When I arrived in the Soviet Union, I drew up a list of the old and new Soviet films that my Indian colleagues and myself wanted to see. The list was headed, of course, by *Ivan*; but it was the last film to come our way. After a good deal of negotiation, a screening was arranged in the tiny projection room generally used by the studio's chief executive. It had about a dozen seats in all, and the screening of the film was kept a closely-guarded secret. Somehow, though, the word went round; and the little 10 foot square booth was packed to bursting point. Few people, it appeared, had seen the film in the eleven years that had elapsed since Eisenstein completed it.

I took a pad and pencil with me to scribble some notes with the help of my interpreter. Eyes glued to the screen and hand scratching frantically away in the dark—possibly it was not the best way to watch a film for which I had waited all these years. But I had waited, and I was anxious to conserve as much of the experience as I could . . .

\* \* \*

*Ivan The Terrible, Part II* is mainly concerned with Ivan's conflict with the Orthodox Church and the Boyars. The Boyars are gathered around the Boyarina Euphrosinia Staritskaya, who, like a queen bee, directs all the action. The Metropolitan Philip heads the Church's revolt, and he and Euphrosinia work hand in glove. Euphrosinia, who had earlier (Part I) poisoned Ivan's Tsarina, Anastasia, now plans the murder of Ivan. Her plot misfires, however, and it is her own son, Vladimir Andreyevitch, who is killed. The film finishes as the full fury of the ageing Ivan is loosed against Boyars, Church and all the deserters who are hindering his work of consolidating the Russian nation.

After brief credit titles, the film opens with a prologue, introducing shots from the first part of the film. The fatigued and lonely Tsar has returned to Moscow, surrounded by his lifeguards—the Oprichniki—in black cloaks, with the Broom and Dog's head emblem on their saddles\*. As Ivan murmurs to himself: "I have no friends; God is my friend", there is a short flashback to his childhood\*. He is a boy of eight, his mother has just died; he is preparing for bed.

\* This sequence appears to be taken from the Prologue to Part I which Eisenstein removed, according to Marie Seton, after editing the first part of *Ivan*.

The Boyar Shuisky throws his feet on to the bed. Young Ivan cries, "Take your feet off my mother's bed!" Laughing, malevolently, Shuisky replies: "Your mother was a bitch and God knows who your father was . . ."

The flashback ends; Ivan turns to the Metropolitan Philip and seeks his friendship: "I ask you not as a Tsar, but as a friend—leave me not alone." When Philip spurns him, there is a frightening sense of loneliness and dejection. Malyuta, one of the lifeguards, approaches Ivan: "I am your dog. I am your friend. You should prefer your dog to your priest."

The Tsar of Part II is introspective, Hamlet-like. He mutters to himself: "What right have you, Tsar Ivan, to judge? And by what right do you wield the sword of retribution?" He rushes to the bedchamber of the long-dead Anastasia, accompanied by Fedor Basmanov, the first of the lifeguards who was dedicated to his service. Fedor tells Ivan that Anastasia was poisoned by Euphrosinia, but that Ivan himself had handed his wife the cup. Fedor's words, "Be firm" recall the words of Anastasia before she died, and restrain his frenzy.

Outside, in the courtyard:

. . . In the snow stands Malyuta . . .  
On their knees before him Boyars. Three of them, all  
from the Kolichev family . . .  
The sabres whistle and their heads fall†.

The Tsar descends to the courtyard:

The Tsar's eyes do not burn with delight, but sorrow.  
The Tsar showers no thanks—but doffs his hat.  
And crosses himself with wide gestures, in memory of  
the fallen . . .  
And suddenly declares, "Too few!"

Over the bodies of the slaughtered Boyars, the Metropolitan Philip swears "The Church is bigger than the Tsar. Tomorrow I shall bend him, crush him."

The means of humbling Ivan is a miracle play of the Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, which is enacted in the Cathedral:

Into the Cathedral comes the Tsar.  
Philip comes forward to meet the Tsar.  
He stops before the furnace.  
Three lads sing with their crystal voices.  
Passionless, expressionless, without understanding  
the words; a choir of angelic transparency.  
And these words fly to meet the Tsar:  
'Why, then, shameless Chaldeans,  
do you serve the iniquitous Tsar?  
Why, then, diabolical Chaldeans,  
do you rejoice  
in a satanic Tsar—  
an outrager, a torturer? . . .'

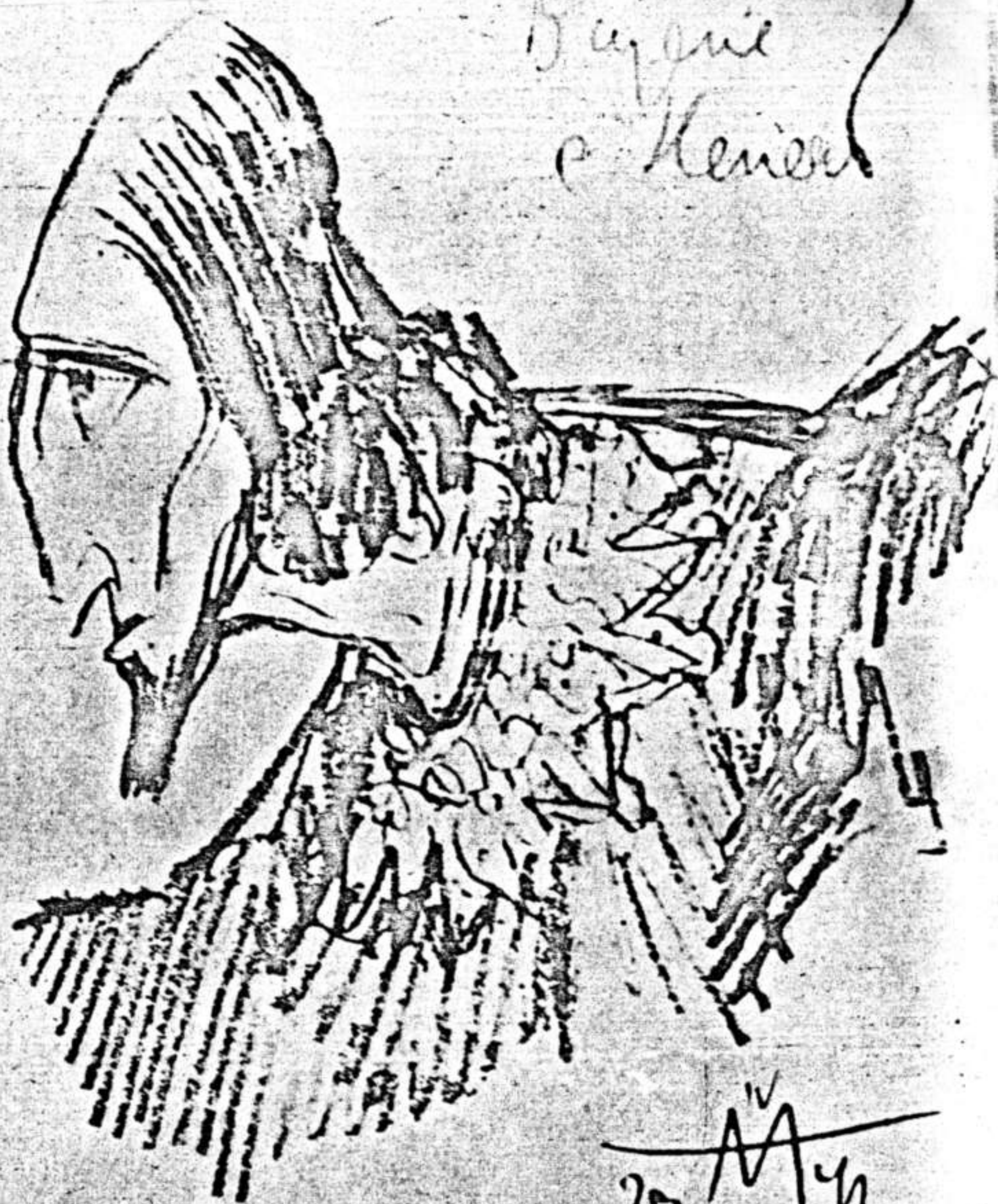
Ivan hears the words in astonishment; but continues as if he has not heard them. He goes to Philip for the Benediction. Three times he bows his head; but three times Philip turns away, and the song continues:

'Now a miracle shalt thou see;  
The Lord of the earth  
Shall be cast down  
By the Lord of the Heavens.'

(Continued on page 188)

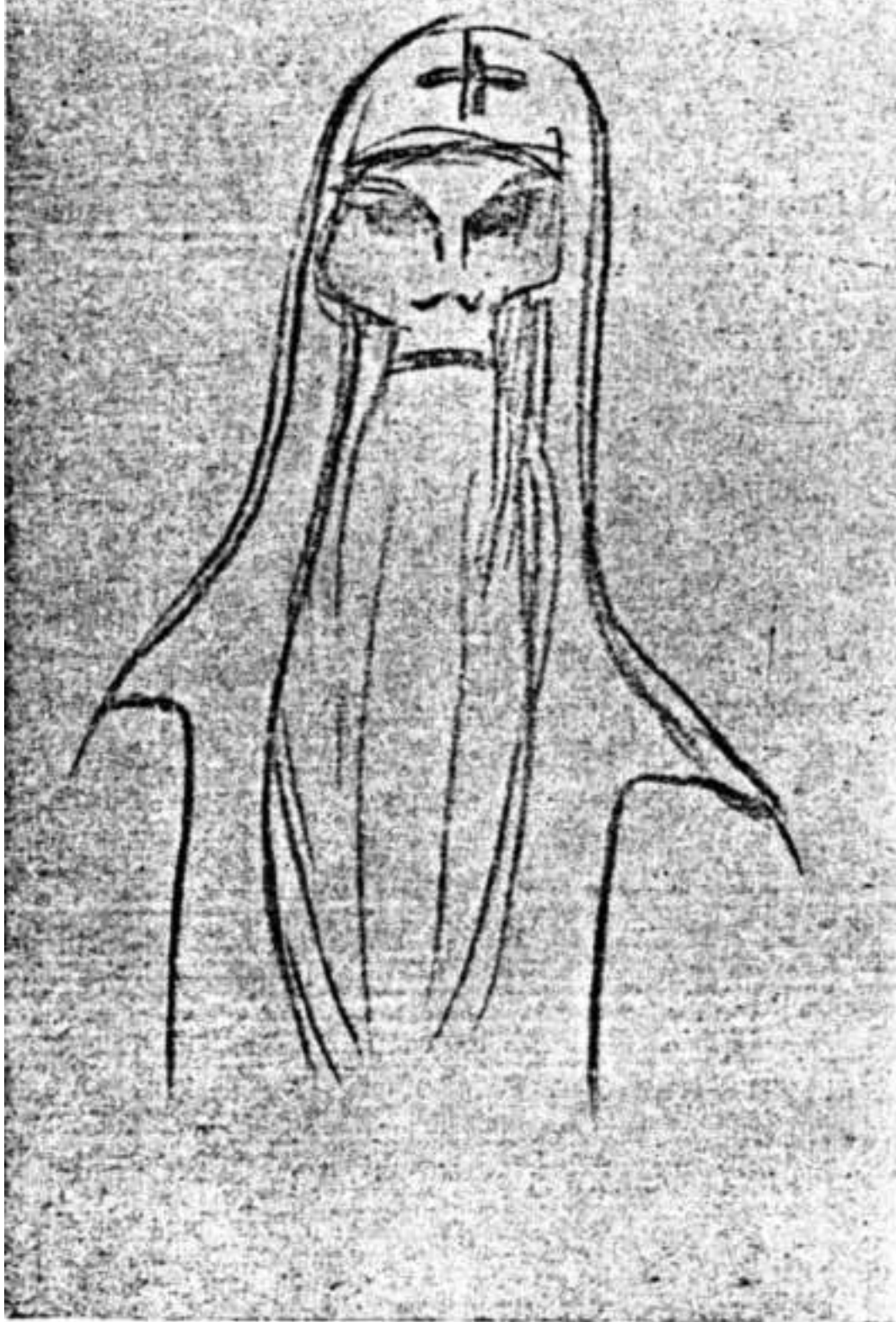
† This and subsequent quotations are from Eisenstein's scenario for Parts I & II of *Ivan the Terrible*, published in English in *Life and Letters*, Nos. 99-107, 1945-1946, in a translation by Herbert Marshall.





*Bygone  
Cherikov*

*W  
M  
H*



Stills from "Ivan the Terrible",  
with Eisenstein's original sketches.

Top of page: head of Ivan.

Extreme right:

Cherkasov's Ivan the Terrible.

Above and right: the bishop Pimen,  
played by Pudovkin.



From the pulpit, Philip launches an attack on Ivan, threatening him with the vengeance of heaven: "Bow to the Church, Ivan, and submit! Abolish the Lifeguards before it is too late."

Striking the ground with his staff, Ivan cries out: "From now on I shall become that which you name me!" A great parchment angel falls from high up in the roof of the cathedral, and as the choir breaks out:

*'From Death he saves  
From the Flames he rescues,  
The Tsar he casts down  
And humbles . . .'*

the angel itself falls into the furnace and is consumed.

*Part of the worshippers fall on their knees.  
The Chaldeans fall down.  
Ivan stands surrounded by fire:  
'Terrible shall I become!'*

The Tsar moves quickly; Philip is arrested. With aid from the Church, Euphrosinia at once sets about plotting the murder of Ivan. Pimen, Episcopo of Novgorod, appoints his confessor Peter to do the deed. Euphrosinia's effeminate son, Vladimir Andreyevitch, is as fearful as a mouse when told that it is he who must succeed the Tsar. To comfort him the terrible old woman holds him to her and sings a lullaby.

The whole of the next sequence, in which Vladimir is prepared to receive the knife intended for Ivan, is in colour. The scene is a banquet. The Lifeguards laugh and clap as a masked girl dances in their midst. Ivan, in apparent high spirits, insists upon the terrified Vladimir dressing up in the

Tsar's regalia. Himself dressed in a bishop's black robes, Ivan bows before Vladimir and offers him drink. Somehow I was reminded of a Hindu sacrificial ceremony by the scene in which, candle in hand, the tipsy, nervous Vladimir leads the procession into the Cathedral.

From this point the film goes back to black-and-white. Peter, the priestly assassin, moves between the columns. Taking Vladimir for the Tsar, he plunges his knife into his back. Vladimir falls on the Cathedral floor like a toppled dummy. The succeeding silence is broken by the triumphant voice of the Boyarina Euphrosinia, who, putting her foot on the prostrate body, exclaims: "Look, people! Ivan is dead." When the figure of Ivan, in a bishop's black, suddenly appears from the files of processionists, the Boyarina takes him for a ghost. The assassin, Peter, is led to Ivan, who asks: "Why do you hold him? He only killed the clown!" Vladimir's body is dragged away.

From now on, Ivan proceeds to break the cobra-head of treason and treachery. Pimen is arrested; Euphrosinia is killed. The film ends as a monk chants in the Cathedral the roll-call of Ivan's victims. "Not for myself—but for the motherland", mutters the Tsar, fatigued but still firm in his purposes†.

\* \* \*

Throughout the entire film, you are aware of the inner conflict of Ivan. Like Hamlet, he is torn within himself, the same melancholy, the same introspection. Yet there is a difference, in that Ivan, always intent upon his cause of uniting Russia, is never dilatory in action. Even so, Eisenstein's interpretation of the Tsar's character in Part II was not acceptable to the Soviet authorities in relation to the political situation at the time that it was completed. A directive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party regarding the film *Great Life* (September 4, 1946), discussing errors into which such directors 'as Comrades Lukov Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Kozintsev and Trauberg' had fallen, said:

Eisenstein in the second part of *Ivan the Terrible* displayed his ignorance of historical facts by portraying the progressive army of the *oprichniki* as a band of degenerates similar to the American Ku Klux Klan, and Ivan the Terrible, a man of strong will and character, as a man of no will and little character, something like Hamlet.

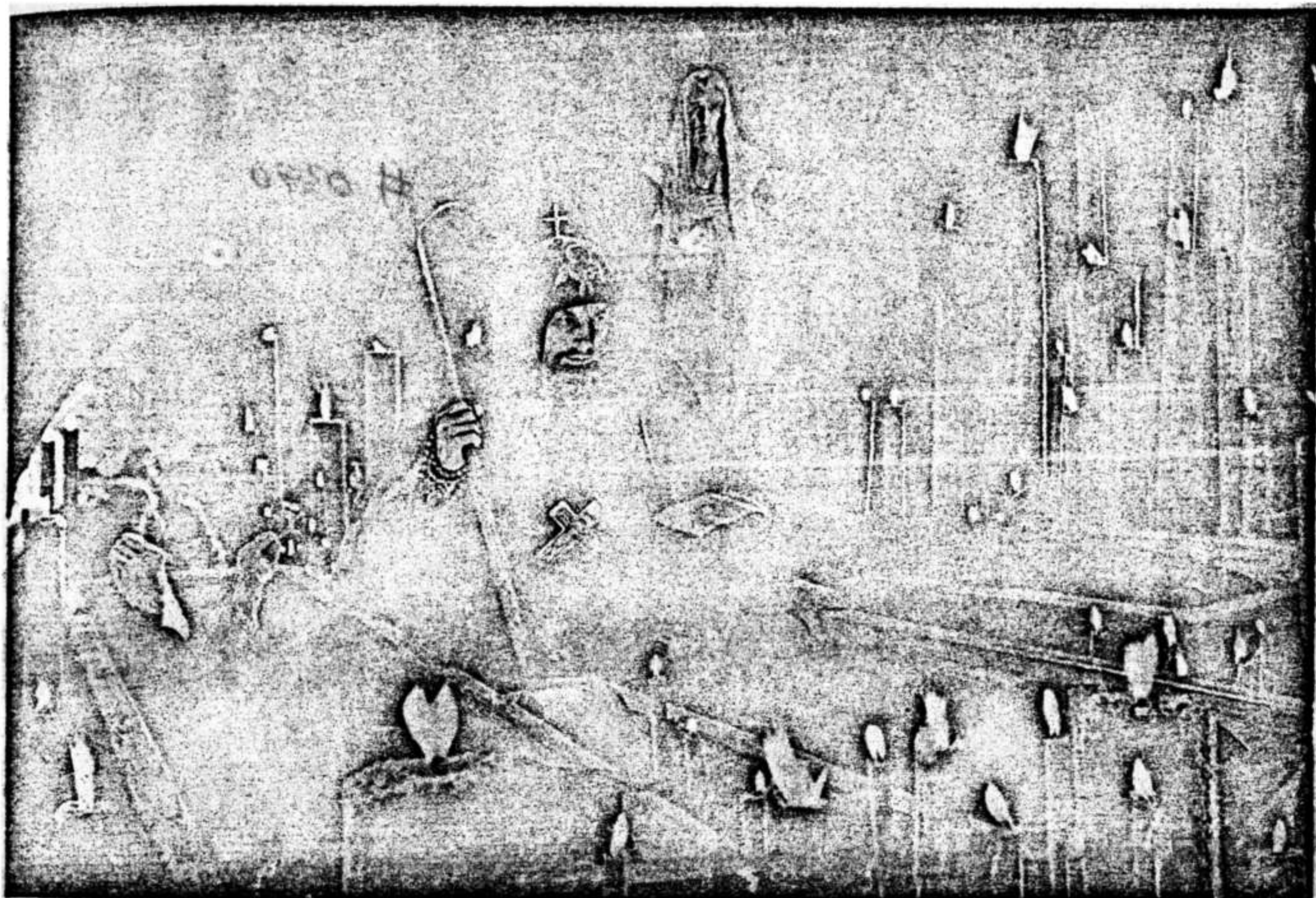
The film was intended as a trilogy. The entire scheme was conceived before the Nazi invasion; but shooting did not begin until the beginning of 1943, at Alma Alta, in the Urals, where the Moscow and Leningrad studios had been evacuated. The Kazak Government placed their new Palace of Culture at Eisenstein's disposal. Most of the shooting had to be done at night, since during the day electric power had to be diverted to munition factories. Eisenstein wrote, designed and directed; Prokoviev wrote the score; Eduard Tisse (who left Eisenstein during the course of the work) and Andrei Moskvin were the photographers. Part I was released in December 1944, and had a great success. Most of Part II was shot at the same time as Part I, and the rest during the winter of 1944-5. Eisenstein did not finish editing Part II, however, until February, 1946. On the day that work was

† The coda of scenes at Windsor Castle and the Palace of Sigismund, King of Livonia, described in published versions of the scenario, appears to have been rejected by Eisenstein at editing stage.

*Euphrosinia comforts her frightened son.*







*Cherkasov as Ivan the Terrible.*

completed, Eisenstein collapsed at a party given to celebrate the award of the Stalin First Class Prize for *Ivan The Terrible Part I*, struck by the first of the severe heart attacks which ended his film work. He partially recovered, to learn of the official disapproval his film had aroused. Later in the year, in the magazine *Culture and Life*, Eisenstein published a statement, in which he said:

We artists forgot . . . those great ideas our art is summoned to serve . . . We forgot that the main thing in art is its ideological content . . . In the Second Part of *Ivan the Terrible* we committed a misrepresentation of historical facts which made the film worthless and vicious in an ideological sense . . . We must fully subordinate our creations to the interest of education of the Soviet people.

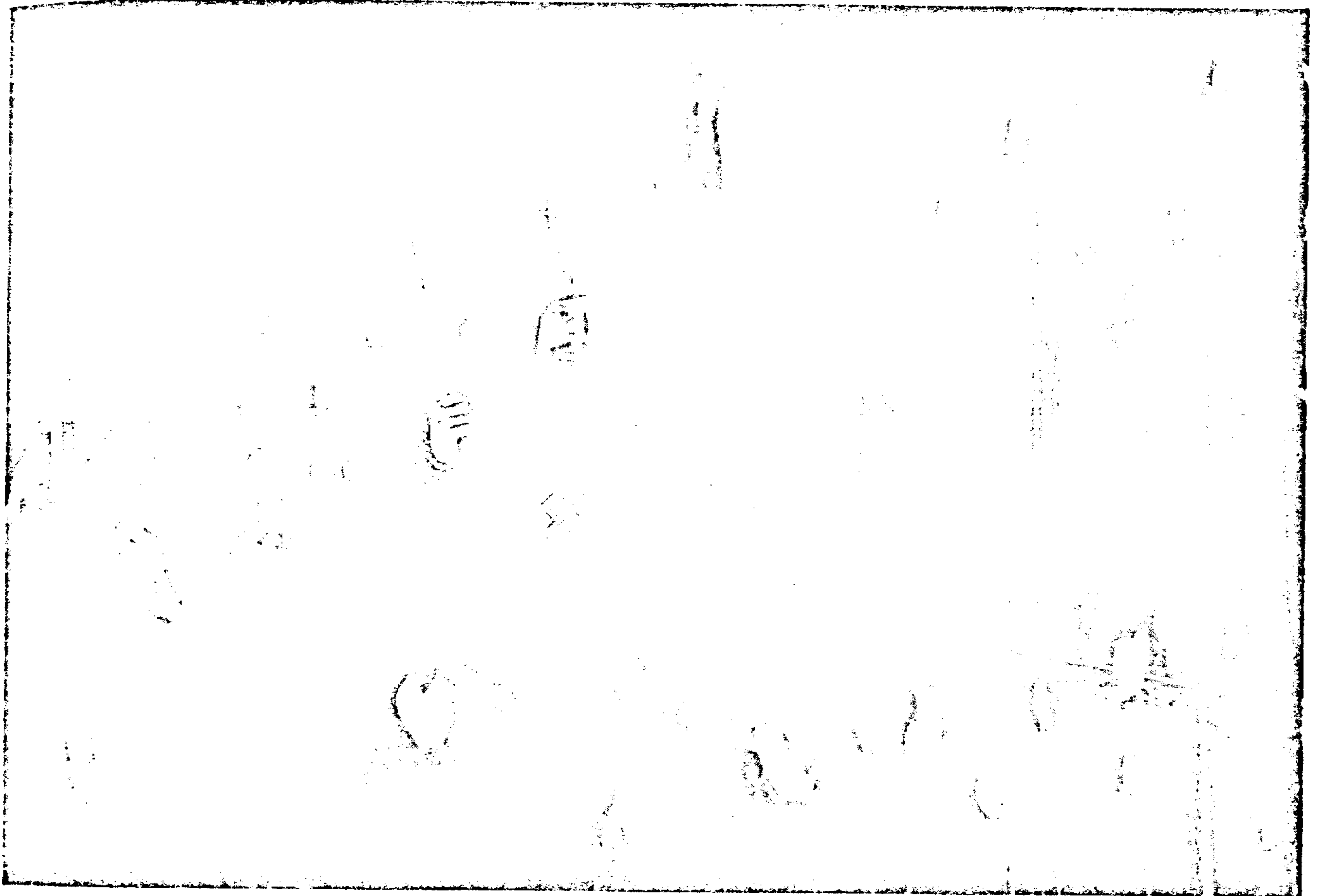
Eisenstein proposed a revision of the Second Part of *Ivan*. He and Cherkasov secured an interview with Stalin in the Kremlin, and Stalin gave his support to a project to reshoot certain scenes in *Ivan* and to resume work on the third part of the trilogy, which was to be in colour. Eisenstein never recovered sufficiently to resume shooting, however. On February 11, 1948, a few days after his fiftieth birthday, he died, alone in his flat at Potylika, still at work on his study of colour cinematography.

Whatever the historical truth or untruth of Ivan's character, Eisenstein, in laying bare the innermost recesses of his mind, has succeeded in creating a *whole* Ivan. Cherkasov said of his role:

Eisenstein set me a whole series of complex tasks. He demanded that I develop and bring out Tsar Ivan's character synchronising the process with the development of the film's action . . . spread over more than twenty years of the Tsar's life. I had to show the complex process that went on in his mind.

The print I saw was ten or eleven years old, and the colour sequence had faded badly. Enough remained, however, to show the bold and imaginative use of colour that Eisenstein intended. But it is not just the colour, or the masterly compositions or the *mise-en-scène*, or even the ideological content, that make *Ivan The Terrible Part II* so memorable. As the major creation of the great master of Soviet cinema, the film is monumental from every point of view. Many people in the Soviet Union expressed to me the hope that the film may be made available for exhibition abroad; and it would indeed be a major tragedy if it were to remain unseen, hidden away in the vaults of the Soviet Film Archive.





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