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Reviews From

War and Peace Part III -1967- (Voina i Mir) (RUSSIAN-70M-COLOR)

Cannes, May 4.

Mosfilm release and production. Features Ludmilla Savelieva, Sergei Bondarchuk, Viatcheslav Tikhonov, Boris Zakhava. Directed by Bondarchuk. Screenplay, Vassili Soloviev, Bondarchuk, based on novel by Leo Tolstoy; camera (Sovcolor), Anatoly Petritsky; music, Viatcheslav Ovtchinnikov. At Cannes Film Fest. Running Time, 85 MINS.

Natacha Ludmilla Savelieva
Pierre Sergei Bondarchuk
Prince Andre..... Viatcheslav Tikhonov
Koutouzov Boris Zakhava
Rostov V. Stanitsyne

When parts one and two of this massive Russian film were reviewed in VARIETY (July 28, '65) from the 1965 Moscow Film Festival, they copped the grand prize. Now part three bows, and there is still one more to be seen (which director Sergei Bondarchuk recently finished shooting). While the first two films ran over three and a half hours, this one, almost all of which is devoted to the battle of Borodino, runs only 85 minutes.

Part III deals with the death of Prince Andre's father; Pierre's visit to the young Natacha and his visit to the battlefield of Borodino, where he wanders amidst the carnage, bombast and explosiveness of hand-to-hand combat and its skirmishes, cannons and the mingling of flesh, horses, earth and sky.

The film remains posey, conventional and more often opting for tableaux, rather than the more personal and interpretive look at the Napoleonic wars and their effect on the Russian people and country. But its sheer size soon casts a spell; that, and the dinning sound of battle. The camera will suddenly zoom up from the field, disclosing thousands of scurrying men, horses and battlegear, or it will watch one character face death near a sizzling bomb, or climb dizzily among the trees.

Bondarchuk has stayed completely with the Tolstoy novel and translated it ambitiously to the screen. It sometimes, therefore, appears literary but has an epic drive that manages to overcome its academic trappings. In the first two sections, the more complex relationships between the main characters were inked in heavily. Here it is war, and mainly the battle that disseminated Napoleon's army and finally led to his disastrous retreat from Moscow.

Bondarchuk also lends massive presence to the role of Pierre and his wanderings and final involvement with the battle creating a good gambit for isolating it and reacting to the clash of professional soldiers. The almost tintype-garish colors help, since the approach is academic, but in a good sense. A man's leg shot off, and his quizzical look as awareness dawns; horses hurtling off their feet; cannons exploding; men rallying, running, withdrawing, going on again. All this begins to take on a hypnotic quality and somehow, the logistics of battle are clear. Napoleon, in the midst of

hundreds of bodies, brooding, is the final shot as a series of frozen stills front for a stentorian voice extolling the victory of the Russian moral drive over the French will of conquest.

The costuming, sheer manpower and the rattling din of violence overpower most critical reservations on this immense film. A scene of hundreds of soldiers running into a stream for a swim before the battle and small personal vignettes counterpointed by the overall sweep give a rhythm to its predictable but always eye-filling spectacle. It also manages to avoid an exhilaration in battle, if that, too, is an unfortunate part of man's constant fighting with man.

A savvy compilation of the first three parts and the last three and still-to-come film should make a strong, big-gun spectacle for foreign playoff, with the pre-sold name of the pic and its sheer, staggering size, if it sometimes gets overweight in its stodgy but firm direction, are also pluses.

Mosk.

Barney Kleid coming out of retirement to rejoin Joe Hornstein Inc., distributor of theatre equipment.