

## Document Citation

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## Istoriya As: Klyachimol

(Asya's Happiness)

(SOVIET-B&W)

Variety

7-5-78

Moscow, June 8.

A Mosfilm Production, Moscow; world rights, Goskino, Moscow. Features entire cast. Directed by Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky. Screenplay, Yuri Klepikov; camera, G. Rerberg; sets, M. Romadin; music, V. Ovchinnikov. Reviewed in a Private Screening Room, Moscow, June 7, '78. Running time: 90 MINS.

Cast: Iya Savina, nonprofessionals.

Shortly after collaborating with Andrei Tarkovsky on "Andrei Rublov" (1966) (he wrote the script), Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky made a much discussed but seldom seen film about the dreary side of Siberian village life, "Asya's Happiness" (1966), which finally saw the light of day at last year's Moscow fest in a sidebar screening arranged by the helmer himself. Although now ten years old, pic is still worth a critical once-over and gives vital clues to the giant steps forward Soviet cinema took a decade ago at the instigation of a young group of talented directors, writers, and actors.

The raw energy alone deposited in "Asya's Happiness" is striking. Yuri Klepikov, the writer who later collaborated on Larissa Shepitko's "The Ascent" (Grand Prix at Berlin in 1977), reportedly waited three years to work with Konchalovsky on a script he tentatively titled "Asya the Lame One." It's the story of a crippled girl badly mistreated by a young boy she is in love with, who gets her pregnant but refuses to marry her. Life is extremely hard in the village she lives in (like an Alaskan mining camp), but she grits her teeth and shows backbone in spite of the daily miseries. She is a kind of symbol for the Russian pioneer spirit dedicated to opening "New Land" in the Wilderness.

Nothing much happens in the film, save for the daily routines of peasants (who play themselves) and occasional contacts with the outside world. Then, an acquaintance offers to marry her despite the lameness and pregnancy, but he is older and hope for her true love still springs eternal. It proves her one chance to leave the rigors of village life behind to go to the city. In the end, she refuses even the late change-of-mind of her lover, faces the fatal birth alone, and resigns herself to her destiny. A realist film with a powerful social message.

Lead is played by Iya Savina, one of the few professional actresses in the film, who is better known as "The Lady with a Dog" (1960) in the Josef Heifitz film. At this time Konchalovsky was influenced by the Polish director Andrzej Wajda, but even more significant is the tradition of Soviet realism going back to such early sound pix as Nikolai Ekk's "Road to Life" (1931) and Boris Barnet's "Outskirts" (1933).

A must for Soviet retros at international film fests and a solid contender for Western art houses.

—Holl.