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IVAN THE TERRIBLE, PART I 1944 96 min. b&w (d) Sergei Eisenstein (c)
Edouard Tisse and Andrei Moskvin (Russian dialog with English subtitles)
Order number: CIC-4 Rental: \$13.00.

Film Description

In 1942, Sergei Eisenstein (POTEMKIN, ALEXANDER NEVSKY, STRIKE) began work on what was to be his last project. He intended IVAN THE TERRIBLE to be a three-part epic biography of Czar Ivan IV. Eisenstein wrote that each part was to be complete in itself, but the whole would offer a comprehensive vision of Ivan's personality: ". . . concealing nothing, smoothing over nothing in the history of the actions of Ivan Grozny--detracting nothing from the formidably impressive romanticism of that splendid image of the past."

Part I opens with the coronation ceremony, an event which marks the first time that a Grand Duke of Moscow has been named absolute ruler of all Russia. When the Archbishop proclaims Ivan (Nikolai Cherkassov, star of ALEXANDER NEVSKY) Czar by divine right, indignation is aroused among the foreign envoys and the boyars. Ivan announces that his chief goal will be to unify all Russian lands seized by foreign powers. After a successful military campaign, he falls seriously ill and goes into seclusion. His aunt Yefrosinya, the leader of the boyars, takes the opportunity to have Ivan's beloved wife Anastasia (L. Tselikovskaya) poisoned, hoping that her own son will become Czar in the event of Ivan's death. He recovers, however, and learning of Anastasia's murder, vows to destroy all of his enemies. He retires to the village of Alexandrovsky, and soon rallies massive support against the boyars.

Critical Comments

Everyone wise to cinema as a truly dynamic art . . . will want to see Sergei Eisenstein's heralded film . . . it is, in its pure display of cinema, one of the most imposing films ever made.

--New York Times

IVAN THE TERRIBLE is the greatest historical film ever to have appeared on the screen. In construction, magnificence, and beauty it surpasses everything we have hitherto seen in the cinema.

--Charlie Chaplin