

Document Citation

Title	Shukhin - Stories from Siberia - The red snowball tree
Author(s)	
Source	<i>National Film Theatre (London, England)</i>
Date	
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Kalina krasnaya (The red snowball tree), Shukshin, Vasili Makarovich, 1973

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE Programme Notes

SHUKSHIN

Stories from Siberia

NFT1

THE RED SNOWBALL TREE (Aka Snowball Berry Red) (Kalina krasnaya)

Director: Vasily Shukshin
Screenplay: Vasily Shukshin
Photography (colour): Anatoli Zabolotskii
Art Direction: Ippolit Novoderzhkin
Music: Pavel Chekalov

CAST:
Egor Prokudin Vasily Shukshin
Lyuba Lidia Fedoseeva
Lyuba's Mother Maria Akvorzova
Lyuba's Father Ivan Rizhiv
Piotr Alexei Vanin
Egor's Mother Ofimia Bistrova

1974 USSR Mosfilm

The 'story' (the writer called it a kinpovest) begins with a scene in the camp from which Egor Prokudin is escaping. The scene closes with the words: "Ahead - is freedom. And again - a search for freedom, a search for the soul's holiday: in the company of thieves, in drunken revelry, in pitiable depravity, in the love of good, dear Lyuba and, finally, in kolkhoz work. Egor does not find freedom. He does not find it in the old life of a thief, which seemed free before. Nor in the new life of a kolkhoz tractor driver. In discussing KALINA KRASNAYA, the film's author admitted: "It's horrible for Egor to believe that till the end of his days there'd be only one course - plowing and planting; for Egor this was perhaps more horrible than prison." Egor ends it all with suicide. The writer uses a banal narrative device: the bandits, whom Egor leaves after deciding to lead an honorable life, are trying to kill him out of revenge. But Egor actually commits suicide. And concerning this, Shukshin says: "I assume that Egor himself was seeking death. I simply lacked the daring to present this unambiguously ... What is more, by virtue of a concrete soul's own laws, life loses its sense."

KALINA KRASNAYA, a story of yet another unsuccessful attempt to find freedom, ends with a symbolic scene: "Egor died. And there he lay, a Russian peasant, on his native steppe, not far from home ... He lay with his cheek pressed to the earth, as though he were listening to something that only he could hear." He returns to the land, he returns to the land - the Russian peasant, Egor Prokudin, killed by the city.

In the film, the murderer of Egor, the bandit Guboshlep (Fat Lip), says even more succinctly: "Egor never was a real bandit, he always remained a muzhik, and there are a lot of muzhiks." At the beginning of the story, Egor, who has left the camp, is reciting Esenin's verses: "Thou hast come, by black destruction - Unafraid I rush to meet thee ... O city, in your discord cruel, You called us filth and liars ... As hunters torture a wolf, While the beaters close in like a vise ..." These lines, written in 1922 by the "last poet of the village", are recited fifty years later by a peasant's son who has become an urban bandit - as his own epitaph, as a prophecy of his death.

Egor Prokudin occupies a special place in Shukshin's creative work. He is not only a man "at the turning point", a rural muzhik who has left for the city, but having preserved a peasant's dream about freedom, he is also a "character at the turning point", and in him features of Razin and Makar Lyubavin (the heroes respectively, of Shukshin's cherished film project on the 17th century rebel and of his Siberian historical novel) are combined with features of heroes of Shukshin's short stories.

- Michael Heller, 'Vasily Shukshin: In Search of Freedom' (1977)

PTO