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PROGRAM CHANGE

"KALINA KRASNAYA" ( THE RED SNOWBALL TREE )  
REPLACES "ANDREI RUBLEV" IN DECEMBER 7  
"SOVIET CINEMA: YESTERDAY AND TODAY" PROGRAM

Vassili Shukshin's KALINA KRASNAYA( THE RED SNOWBALL TREE) will be shown at 9:15 Wednesday, December 7, in Wheeler Auditorium (UC Campus), following Nikita Mikhailkov's THE SLAVE OF LOVE which will be shown as announced at 7:30. Admission will be \$2.00 for this double feature program, which is part of the SOVIET CINEMA: YESTERDAY AND TODAY series circulated by the American Film Institute on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

The repeat screening of ANDREI RUBLEV, shown by PFA on Nov. 2 and announced for a repeat on Dec. 7 at 9:15, has been postponed and will take place in February or March 1978.

THE RED SNOWBALL TREE --widely considered one of the best and most daring Soviet films of the 70s -- is the fifth and final feature film by the late short story writer/actor/director Vassili Shukshin, who died in 1974 of a heart attack while acting in Sergei Bondarchuk's feature THEY DIED FOR THEIR COUNTRY. His previous films were YOUR SON AND BROTHER (1966); THERE WAS A LAD (1964); STRANGE PEOPLE (1973); and TRAVELLING COMPANIONS (1973).

Writing in the news pages of the New York Times on April 7, 1974 , under the heading "Unorthodox Film Stirs Moscovites: Few Punches Pulled In Story About AN Ex-Convict", Hedrick Smith reported the following on the film's Moscow Premiere:

"The current sensation on the Moscow screen is a highly unorthodox film about a former convict who emerges from prison to encounter taints and discrimination and then teeters between going straight and lapsing into his evil ways, only to be killed by his old gang.

"The violence, the unhappy ending, and more deeply, the philosophical implication that man is not perfectible even in socialist society, is a challenge to Communist preachments and the typically utopian plots of Soviet socialist realism.

"In fact, the entire two hours of The Red Snowball Tree psdd without the normally obligatory paens to the Communist Party. Nor is there any sign that the party or any established public organization is concerned with the process of rehabilitation.

"The author, Vassili Shukshin, a short-story writer, conveys the notion , increasingly popular among Slavophile intellectuals, that modern urban life is a corrupting source of evil and that men can recapture their morality only by returning to their roots in the ethnically pure Russian countryside.



"...the film violates a number of standard canons of Soviet movie-making. In its candid naturalism, it contains flashes of personal violence, an unflattering glimpse of a Soviet prison, a picture of an urban orgy peopled with fleshly prostitutes and an unvarnished portrait of the rural poor.

"Moreover, along with Mr. Shukshin's celebrated love of nature --his hero often kisses and fondles birches, calling them his brides --the camera not only caresses the Russian countryside but, at poignant moments, lingers on churches or on the ikons hanging in the corners of peasant homes.

"Mr. Shukshin himself plays the hero- a flinty, chip-on-the-shoulder, sometimes mocking, sometimes cold-eyed, Jack Palance type, fast with the hands, fond of splashing around money, daring to fondle fleetingly in public the legs of a strange girl, hungry for the excitement of the city but not nourished by what it offers. This is an unusual view of the dark side of man's nature.

"What saves the former convict, and evidently the film itself, in the eyes of the guardians of Soviet culture, is first-rate acting and a rich twist of humour that plays on the incongruity of a tough hero mingling with simple peasants. One of them, a sturdy but handsome young woman, became his pen pal while in prison and then offered to help him go straight when he got out.

"What makes the film so exceptional is the vein of violent irrationality and ambiguity that harks more of Western, or even Polish and Hungarian film-makers, than of the Soviet screen with its imperatives for clear-cut distinctions between good and evil."

--New York Times, April 7. 1974

Writing in Variety on January 11, 1977, the American film critic Ron Holloway reported on the Shukshin Retrospectives which took place in 1975 and 1976 at Berlin's International Forum of Young Cinema, Venice, and Karlovy Vary:

"Shukshin, to be sure, made films a bit off the beaten path of contemporary Soviet Cinema. His themes deal with the hard life of farmers and workers, with thieves and prisoners, with 'anti-heroes' who stretch the truth and are, in general, life-long failures.

"It is an autobiographical cinema, for Shukshin himself came from a small village in Siberia (one of his films was shot there and features acquaintances and relatives). He worked as a pipe-fitter, and was introduced to literature and writing while directing a night school of adult education. He got his own education while on military duty in the Navy.

"Shukshin, on one side, can be judged as the primary example of the departure from the heroes of Soviet socialist realism. But, on the other hand, his human faces and fierce love for man's weaknesses underscore a noticeable trend in Soviet Cinema over the past decade toward a broader and deeper social consciousness.

"The films in the Soviet Republics, dealing with the national minorities in Georgia, Lithuania, Moldavia, Armenia, Kirghizia and others, have always spoken to the traditions and life-style of the people. Shukshin, who began his career at the age of 30 in 1959 ...ties all these lines of development into one dynamic personality.

"Perhaps the most striking quality in his five films is the love and compassion for people who are vulnerable. He liked the useless, but magnificent, gesture, the tragic in life, the pure of heart. Not all of his films were successes... but there is a polish in certain scenes that ranks them with the best moments: in the cinema of Ford, Hawks, and Walsh."

KALINA KRASNAYA (THE RED SNOWBALL TREE). Written and Directed by Vassili Shukshin. Photographed by A. Zabolotsky. With Vassili Shukshin, L. Fedoseeva, I. Ryzshov. (1974, 95 mins, 35mm, Color, Print Courtesy of the Russian Art and Culture Society, San Francisco).