

Document Citation

Title	The forty-first
Author(s)	David Stewart Hull
Source	<i>Publisher name not available</i>
Date	1960 Jul 06
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Sorok pervyi (The Forty-first), Chukhrai, Grigori, 1956

July 6, 1960
Webster Hall 8:00 P.M.
The Russian Language Institute

THE FORTY-FIRST (1956)

Maryutka Izolda Izvitskaya
The White Officer Oleg Strizhenov

Story by Boris Lavrenyov
Camera by S. Urusevsky
Directed by G. Chukhari
Screenplay by G. Koltunov
Music by N. Kryukov
A Mosfilm Production

When THE FORTY-FIRST was first shown to Western audiences at Cannes in early 1957, it caused a sensation, for it seemed that, in the person of the beautiful Izolda Izvitskaya, the Russian filmmakers had finally admitted the existence of sex-appeal. And the story itself was quite different from anything that had been made during the post-war period.

However, a look at Soviet film history shows that THE FORTY-FIRST had been filmed once before, in 1927, directed by the great Yakov Protazanov (1881-1945) with the script personally written by the author of the original story, Boris Lavrenyev (b. 1881)

Lavrenyev's short stories, novels and plays have proved popular source material for Soviet movies. A

list of such works would include LEON COUTURIER (1927), a drama of a Red spy disguised as a Frenchman behind White lines; THE BREAK (1929), about the effect of the revolution on the navy; and FOR THOSE WHO ARE AT SEA (1948), the story of a Navy officer who places his own good above that of his comrades. One of Mr. Lavrenyev's most popular dramas, as yet unfilmed, is The Voice of America (1949) dealing with the ideological dangers of listening to that radio station.

The story of THE FORTY-FIRST deals with a small Red Guard detachment which has lost its way in the sands of the treacherous Kara-Kum desert sometime during the Civil War. The best sniper in the group is a young girl named Maryutka. When the group spots an enemy caravan, Maryutka scores her 40th point, but misses on her 41st attempt to kill a White Guard officer. He is taken prisoner, and the two soon fall in love, the affair ending tragically after the couple become shipwrecked on an island on the Aral sea.

THE FORTY-FIRST was the first directoral assignment of Grigori Chukhari, and it is an outstanding success on all sides. The cameraman Urusevsky achieved some remarkable results, and his desert color photography is probably unmatched. Miss Izvitskaya is both beautiful and an expert actress, and later performed with distinction in a filmed version of Sholokhov's VIRGIN SOIL UPTURNED. Mr. Strizhenov (without dyed blonde hair) was the hero of a recent film describing the exploits of the 15th century Russian traveller to India, Afanasy Nikitin.

The Cannes Film Festival jury in 1957 awarded a prize to THE FORTY-FIRST for the outstanding film scenario of the year, and cited it particularly for "a special quality of grandeur," although a few critics wondered what was so particularly grand in a story which involved a heroine who shoots her lover in the back. However, the film was a great popular success in both the Soviet Union and Europe.

It is important to note, however, that tonight's print, runs almost twenty minutes less than the original release print, which accounts for a few rather sudden breaks in continuity. It is apparently the feeling of American distributors that Soviet films are too long for American viewers to sit through, hence the almost constant cutting that one must endure in American prints. However, the 16mm print, circulated by another concern, is complete.

David Stewart Hull.

Film length: 88 minutes.