

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Ivan the terrible (1940-1945) : parts I and II</b>
Author(s)	Charles III Stromeyer
Source	<i>Dartmouth Film Society</i>
Date	1963-64?
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	4
Subjects	Eisenstein, Sergei (1898-1948), Riga (formerly Russia), Latvia
Film Subjects	Boyarskii zagovor (Ivan the Terrible, part 2), Eisenstein, Sergei, 1958 Ivan groznyi (Ivan the Terrible, part 1), Eisenstein, Sergei, 1944

# Dartmouth Film Society Film Notes

## IVAN THE TERRIBLE (1940-1945) Parts I and II

Tsar Ivan	Nikolai Cherkasov
Tsarina Ana'stasia	Ludmila Tselikovskaya
Euphrosinia Staritskayer	Serafima Birman
Vladimir Staritsky	Pavel Kadochnikov
Oprichniki:	
Malyata Skuratov	Mikhail Zharov
Alexey Basmanov	Amvrosy Buchma
Ryodor Basmanov	Mikhail Kuznetsov
Prince Andrei Kurbsky	Mikhail Nazvanov
Boyar Fyodor Kolychyev	
(subsequently Abbot Philip	Andrei Abrikosov
Pimen, Archbishop of Novgorod	Alexander Myebrov
An Archdeacon	Maxim Mikhailov
The Simpleton Nikola, called	Vsevolod Pudovkin
"Big Fool"	

Scenario by Sergei Eisenstein. Photographed by Andrei Moskvin (interiors) and Eduard Tissé (exteriors). Music by Sergei Prokofiev. Lyrics by Vladimir Lugovsky. Sets by Isaac Shpinel and L. Naymova. Assistants to the director, B. Sveshnikov and L. Indenbom. Part One released by Combined Studios, December 30, 1944. Part Two released by Mosfilm, September 1958.

Directed by SERGEI M. EISENSTEIN

Sergei Eisenstein's last work, IVAN THE TERRIBLE, was created between the years 1940 and 1945 partly in Moscow and partly in Alma Ata in Central Asia, to which the company retreated before the Germans, who were at the gates of Moscow. It was felt that the finished film would revive the life-blood of the Russians in the face of war. Part I, was released in the last days of 1944 and immediately won the Stalin Prize. However, Part II was long delayed, and not finally released until 1958, for bureaucratic officialdom saw in it sore ideological aberrations: "Portraying the progressive force of the oprichniki as a band of degenerates similar to the American Ku Klux Klan, and by portraying Ivan, a man of strong will and character, as a man of no will and little character, resembling Hamlet." Even though the film was finally released, there is in existence, apparently, a different edition of Part II in the Russian State Film Archive, which was recently seen by a writer for Sight and Sound and described as being far better than any Western version.

Eisenstein's own program note explicates the film's conception: "We have no intention in our film of Ivan the Terrible to white-wash him in the people's memory or to make Ivan the Terrible an Ivan the Gentle. It is our wish to give Ivan that to which every hero of the people is entitled: to show objectively the full scope and range of his activities. For it is only in this way that we can explain all those traits, unexpected, at times harsh, and often terrible, which were indispensable in a statesman of an epoch so fraught with passion and blood as was the Renaissance of the sixteenth century. . . Conceding nothing, smoothing over nothing. . . detracting nothing from the formidable impressive romanticism of that splendid image of the past, it has been our wish to present it in all its integrity to the audience of the whole world. This image, fearful and entrancing, attractive and terrible, utterly tragic in the inward struggle against the enemies of his country, will become comprehensible to the man of our day."

In another document ("How We Filmed Ivan the Terrible"), Eisenstein delineates the historical role which Ivan enacts. "Ivan the IV's principal aim was to create a strong centralized sovereign State in the place of the scattered, mutually hostile feudal principalities of all Russia. He laid the foundations of a vast and mighty power. . . The heirs to the feudal lords crushed by Ivan refused to accept the idea of a unified power and did not scruple to resort to treachery and conspiracy. They secretly prepared the ground for an invasion of Russia by her Western neighbors and it was they who cried to heaven about the cruelty and bloodthirstiness of the Moscow Tsar. They painted Ivan's harsh measures and relentless firmness in protecting the interests of the State against self-interest and arbitrary power of the boyars as irrational malice and insane thirst for blood. . ."

Thus, if Ivan is regarded as being Terrible, his terribleness is only a measure of the will he has for carrying out his avowed life's purpose -- to make Russia a mighty State, whatever deeds the task entails. In fact, the tragic proportions of Ivan's life are specifically manifested by the fact that only one loved and early lost soul understood his purpose, the Tsarina Anastasia. The blood that Ivan so often causes to be spilled is necessary precisely because so few understand or desire the fulfillment of his purpose; and yet Ivan seeks to find in God a trust and love that transcends that of the human, except that of his Tsarina's. In the "definitive biography" Sergei M. Eisenstein, Marie Seton has a passage which most expressly reflects Ivan's conflict.

"The Ivan of history was both a man of great ability who brought unity to Russia and one compelled to appalling violence. He was. . . a man filled with mystic yearning. In Sergei Mikhailovich's interpreta-

tion, Ivan's sense of being ordained by God clashes more and more with the Orthodox Church, which is dedicated to furthering the interests of the Boyars. The whole of Part II reveals the philosophic conflict between the mystic's direct perception of man as God's instrument and the Church's manipulation of ceremonial observance in order to maintain tradition and the power of entrenched interests. Hence the Church, headed in Part I by Pimen and in Part II by Fyodor Kolychev, who became Philip the Metropolitan, wages an ever more bitter war against Ivan's political schemes. Ivan, in turn, is forced to declare war against the Church as it becomes even more closely identified with the Boyars, headed by the evil figure of Euphrosinia Staritskaya. Ivan becomes invulnerable, save in his overriding compulsion toward coming face to face with God - the Tsar of Heaven - in the spirit of an Old Testament prophet. This is the dominant thread intersecting the accumulated intrigue of the Church in Part II. It seems to go hand in hand with Ivan's enormous need to be received with understanding and love and be delivered from his sense of unutterable loneliness."

To render his conception of history a tragedy, and to raise it to the mythic level, Eisenstein had to go against his former trend towards realism and dynamic montage, which *POTEMKIN* and *OCTOBER* had so wonderfully demonstrated. He turned now towards monumental settings and ritualistic acting. In "How We Filmed Ivan the Terrible," Eisenstein describes the relation of form and theme.

"The grandeur of our subject called for monumental means of presentation. Details were pushed into the background and everything was subordinated to the principal idea of the might of Russia and the struggle to make it a great power. The principal conflicts in the general struggle, in which Ivan lost those who were nearest and dearest to him -- some because, failing to understand his aims, they turned away from him, some because of the mercenary nature of their aims caused them to oppose him, and some because they perished at his side in the course of the struggle -- called for the use of the forms of tragedy. This was how the style of the film was determined, a style that runs counter to many of the traditional methods to which we have grown accustomed on the screen both here and abroad. But with Ivan we wanted a different tone. In him we wished chiefly to convey a sense of majesty, and this led us to adopt majestic forms. Frequently the dialogue is accompanied by music, and choral singing intermingles with it. The principal idea -- the formation of a strong State -- governs the Tsar's whole conduct. Irrelevant details in the characters of the other personages are ignored, while their principal features -- chiefly their hostility or loyalty to Ivan's cause -- are drawn in bold relief."

Eisenstein made over two thousand drawings, carefully delineating every compositional detail. He forced his actors to adopt the Russian classical style of acting of the early 19th century. Cherkasov, who played Ivan, however, commented that the director, "carried away by his enthusiasm for pictorial composition... molded expressive, monumental mise-en-scène, but it was often difficult to justify the content of the form he was striving to achieve. In some of the mise-en-scène, extremely graphic in idea and composition, an actor's strained muscles often belied his inner feeling."

Eisenstein died in February of 1948, the second part of his film in the vault and the third part only on paper. Part III was apparently to be entirely in color, and two short scenes at the end of Part II were reshot in color (probably poorly controlled Agfacolor, booty from the sack of the Nazi controlled Barrandov studios in Prague) as an experiment. It is totally unlike any color seen before or since. In this case, rather than functioning to add surface beauty to a scene, it is utilized for psychological purpose, with exotic filters and absolutely no attempt to recreate reality. Unfortunately, Agfacolor is extremely unstable, and by the time of the film's release in 1958 (as a pièce de résistance of the Russian exhibit at the film festival held in conjunction with the World's Fair in Bruxelles) the color on the original negative had begun to decompose. Yet it gives a good idea of Eisenstein's intentions and makes one regret all the more that Part III was never made.

There has been a certain amount of snide comment in the press both in Europe and America that politics were not the only reason for the banning of Part Two. Indeed, the final all-male orgy sequence is something most unusual in film, expressing for the only time in his films Eisenstein's personal aberration, so carefully avoided by Miss Seton in her "definitive biography." A review by Dwight Macdonald in Esquire is particularly oriented in this direction of interpretation.

IVAN Part II was released in America in late 1959. It was received with mixed reactions. Paul Beckley in the Herald Tribune recognized it as a masterpiece. Bosley Crowther, in one of his more regrettable flights of fancy remarked, "The place for the last of Eisenstein's pictures is in an hospitable museum." Time called it "queer, lugubrious, horribly beautiful." Variety decided that it was "hardly an entertaining film," and the ultra-right wing Films in Review said that Stalin was right in shelving it, but for "artistic sins" not political ones. Yet the public seemed to like it, and both parts stay in almost continuous projection wherever there is a sensitive and educated audience for Eisenstein's unique creation.

Charles Stromeyer III



Selected bibliography:

Sergei Eisenstein, Ivan the Terrible (complete film script), Simon and Schuster, New York, 1962.

Sergei Eisenstein, "How We Filmed Ivan the Terrible" in Cinema, VOKS, Moscow, 1954. (In English)

Barthelemy Amengual, Serguei Mikhaïlovitch Eisenstein, Premier Plan no. 25, Lyons, 1962. (In French)

Jay Leyda, Kino, Macmillan, London, 1960.

Marie Seton, Sergei M. Eisenstein, the Definitive Biography, Grove Press, New York, 1960. (paperback)

\* \* \* \* \*

We are continuing our listings of the favorite films of a number of our members, as well as publishing the results of polls in several magazines. If you have a list, please send it to the Film Society, and we will consider it for publication.

List of Benfield Pressey, professor emeritus, English Department:

1. Henry V (1946) Directed by Laurence Olivier.  
For the unfailingly beautiful backgrounds and the language of Shakespeare.
2. Hamlet (1948) Directed by Laurence Olivier.  
For the inspired direction and the language of Shakespeare.
3. Richard III (1955) Directed by Laurence Olivier.  
For the remarkable acting from a distinguished cast and the language of Shakespeare.
4. La Belle et la Bête (Beauty and the Beast) (1946) Directed by Jean Cocteau.  
For originality in picture-making and thought-provoking use of symbols.
5. Judgement at Nuremberg (1961) Directed by Stanley Kramer.  
For topicality made universal.
6. Billy Budd (1961-2) Directed by Peter Ustinov.  
For success in making a movie that was intellectually subtle.
7. Red Shoes (1947) Directed by Michael Powell and Erich Pressburger.  
For the most successful mixture of fantasy and psychological truth.
8. Un, Deux, Trois, Quatre (US title: Black Tights) (1961) Directed by Terence Young.  
For story-telling in pantomime.
9. Seven Brides for Seven Brothers (1954) Directed by Stanley Donen.  
Has there been a better American musical?
10. La Strada (1954) Directed by Federico Fellini.  
For extraordinary acting in the conflict between sensitivity and insensitivity.

List of the editors of Cahier du Cinema (1958), perhaps the most influential and controversial film magazine being published today:

1. Sunrise (1927) Directed by F. W. Murnau.
2. La Regle du Jeu (1939) Directed by Jean Renoir.
3. Voyage in Italie (Strangers) (1953) Directed by Roberto Rossellini.
4. Ivan the Terrible (1940-1945) Directed by Sergei Eisenstein.
5. The Birth of a Nation (1915) Directed by D. W. Griffith.
6. Confidential Report (Mr. Arkadin) (1955) Directed by Orson Welles.

7. Ordet (1954) Directed by Carl Dreyer.
8. Ugetsu Monogatari (1953) Directed by Kenji Mizoguchi.
9. L'Atalante (1934) Directed by Jean Vigo.
10. The Wedding March (1927) Directed by Erich von Stroheim.
11. Under Capricorn (1949) Directed by Alfred Hitchcock.
12. Monsieur Verdoux (1947) Directed by Charles Chaplin.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our next program is Wednesday, January 15, 1964: TOKYO MONOGATARI by the great Japanese director, Yasujiro Ozu. Please note the change in date from that previously announced. We have reason to believe that this showing will be the American premiere of this remarkable film.

\* \* \* \* \*

Pending confirmation from Japan, the Ozu retrospective will be presented early in the new year. It will include I WAS BORN, BUT... (1932); LATE SPRING (1949); EARLY SPRING (1956); GOOD MORNING! (1959-color); LATE AUTUMN (1960-color). Dates will be announced later. The same retrospective will be screened at the Museum of Modern Art and also on the West Coast.

\* \* \* \* \*

Members lucky enough to be in the New York area during the holiday season will be able to catch the Chaplin revival series presented at the Plaza Theatre. It will include CITY LIGHTS, MODERN TIMES, THE GREAT DICTATOR, MONSIEUR VERDOUX and LIMELIGHT in addition to a package of three short films under the name THE CHAPLIN REVIEW. We hope that these films will become generally available in the future.