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much of a chance and "The Mirror" will require deft handling to put it over with even the knowing public (the recent Time hacking of "Solaris" is a case in point).

Nevertheless, it's a guess that "The Mirror" will go down in film books as the best or most striking of Tarkovsky's films — better appreciated than any of his three earlier genius-laden pics: "Ivan's Childhood" (1962), "Andrei Rublov" (1966, released in 1969), and "Solaris" (1972). He made this film at the height of his poetic powers after many years of remaining faithful to a progressive film movement he almost single-handedly instigated as its spiritual leader. Moreover, "The Mirror" was molded from a script of barely a single page — to receive permission under those circumstances signals respect of an unusual, commanding nature from the powers that be in the Soviet film industry. It's different than any other Soviet film to date.

One may have to be in his forties and later to grasp some of the personal confessions buried in "The Mirror," but, notwithstanding, the images are clear and poignant and overwhelming. The use of color (mixed with black-&-white sequences, perhaps to underscore the time lapses) is astonishing, particularly in the dream passages — as when a shed burns down in blazing, fiery reds, the stuff of a childhood memory at its first stages of development. Nature and natural forces play a key role, as usual, and this time the impression is more mystic than physical.

The film unfolds in segments, some self-contained and measurable, others puzzling and purposely mysterious. The central figure is not the boy, who is autobiographically sketched into the story, but the object of these dreams: the mother, the wife, the woman, all in one figure, a lady of warm, physical presence, lovely and gentle countenance, and with an inner vitality that is unquestionable from the beginning.

In a kind of prologue, a boy with a stuttering defect is hypnotized in a clinic to stop the stammering. Then the film begins with a prewar scene in the country: a rickety fence, upon which sits a woman before a field of green grass; a stranger approaches with a doctor's bag and asks the way; the forces of wind and rain hint at a disaster to come, and a shed burns down in crimson fire.

A poem is read (apparently written by Tarkovsky's father, who appears only on the edges of the entire film), a photograph of the father is seen, and the face of a boy is reflected in a mirror, and dream-like shots of plaster falling and woman's hair accompany others in an empty room.

The time is now the Stalin period, as a picture on a wall indicates, and the woman hurries through a factory area to an office, where she pages frantically through pages in search of a "mistake." Docu sequences follow of the Spanish Civil War, bombing and misery, and later more scenes describing the drudgery of war (not the heroism) appear as men drag themselves with weapons across sucking mud-flats.

The film closes in the postwar period. The woman, back in the country, trades in her earrings for money to buy food. An attempt to kill a chicken, with feathers flying in her face, bring revulsion and she takes back the earrings. The father has died, and a memory of young love in a meadow blend with green fields and white birch trees. A baby cries.

"The Mirror" is a film of the spirit. It will be hailed as a masterpiece and find a responsive audience in the art house. —Holl.

Zerkalo
(The Mirror)
(SOVIET-COLOR-B&W)

Moscow, Dec. 10.

A Mosfilm production, Moscow. Written and directed by Andrei Tarkovsky. Camera (color, b-&-w), Georgi Rerberg. Reviewed at Gosfilm, Moscow, December 9, '76. Running time: 90 MINS.
Cast: Margareta Terehova.

After the few side-screenings for delegations at the 1975 Moscow film fest, Andrei Tarkovsky's "The Mirror" became a legend overnight (although anyone living or visiting the Soviet Union in the past few years could see the film at certain small cinemas off the beaten path). In March, it will, according to official sources in Moscow, open in Paris for the first exposure outside the Soviet Union — but sans festival and fanfare of any sort. It has been sold to other countries under the same unusual conditions.

As a result, the film will be much discussed — for both Cannes and Berlin, among other festivals, tried to get the film since it was finished. Distributors eventually paid a high price to show it on the Soviet's own terms (in West Germany it's rumored to have been bought by television). When it opens, the world press will not be there — and that will undoubtedly have some effect on the kind of criticism written. Add to that the number of lines that have been written on the film thus far — the Soviet critics have discussed it openly, "Le Monde" printed a lengthy article in April of 1975 and "Sight and Sound" another in spring of 1976 — and you have a cause celebre before the fact.

The name of Tarkovsky alone inspires attention and reverence, that is, at festivals which buzz with little known news and predigested info of the most suspect sort. In the commercial arena, he doesn't have