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BEZHIN MEADOW

Credits:

Directed by Sergei M. Eisenstein

**Scenario for the first version by Alexander Rzheshevsky
(based on the short story of the same title by Ivan Turgenev and on the life of
Pavel Morozov)**

Script revisions for the second version by Eisenstein and Isaac Babel

Photography by Edward Tisse

Special photographic effects by Vladimir Nilsen

Sets designed by Lev Kuleshov

Music for the original version by Gavril Popov

Music for the reconstructed version by Sergei Prokofiev (selections from his works)

Sound by Bogdankevich and Leonid Obolensky

Production Assistants: Jay Leyda, M. Gomarov, Gutin

Produced by Mosfilm

BEZHIN MEADOW

Cast:

Vitya Kartashov: Stepok

Boris Zakhava: father in first version (has no name)

Yelena Teleshova: Praskovia, president of the collective farm

Nikolai Khemelyos: father in second version (Samckhin)

Vassily Orlov: chief of the political department (first version)

P. Arzhanov: chief of the political department (second version)

Maslov: anarchist incendiary

Erast Garin: Praskovia's husband

Reconstructed version prepared by Naum Kleimann and Yutkevitch

Running time: thirty minutes

Distributed by Artkino Pictures

BEZHIN MEADOW - PROGRAM NOTES

The period between OLD AND NEW and BEZHIN MEADOW was one of almost constant frustration for Eisenstein. Project after project failed to get beyond the writing stage. The footage he shot for QUE VIVA MEXICO! was taken out of his hands and edited by someone else. (It was not until ALEXANDER NEVSKY in 1938 that he was actually to complete another film.)

BEZHIN MEADOW concerns the period of collectivization in Russian agriculture, and the scenario had two principal sources. The first was the true story of Pavel Morozov, who prevented members of his family from burning a harvest and was then killed by them. The second was the short story BEZHIN MEADOW by Ivan Turgenev. The influence of Turgenev can be seen not only in the situation of young boys standing guard by night, but also in the highly impressionistic scenes of the film's opening.

The scene in the second version in which Stepok frees the pigeons and they fly away from the smoke and flames also has its origin in the Turgenev story. Shooting began in May, 1935 and everything went well for a time. Then a series of delays began to plague the production. Bad weather and the illness of Eisenstein halted shooting for a while. Then Eisenstein contracted smallpox and shooting ceased altogether.

About two-thirds of the film had been shot and was now screened in the director's absence. He was very strongly criticized for much of his conception (the attack on formalism was at its peak now) and began working on a new version after his recovery.

Isaac Babel was brought in to help with the script, cast changes were made and new footage was shot. But it was still officially unacceptable and production was finally halted early in 1937. Eisenstein made a public apology which may be taken as largely pro forma. That was the end of his work on BEZHIN MEADOW.

The negative was destroyed during bombing in World War II and was believed lost for many years. Shortly before her death in 1965, Eisenstein's widow revealed that her husband had been in the habit of clipping frames off the ends of takes, and turned over clips from Bezhin Meadow. These were laboriously put together forming the present version.

What we see now is but a slight indication of what might have been. However, keeping in mind Eisenstein's extremely ambitious ideas for the use of sound montage to accompany the visual montage (this was to be his first sound film), one can get a very good impression of the likely result. The story was his most sophisticated to date, possessing a greater depth and scope than his previous work. Also, the great images which we can see in this version indicate a definite advancement in Eisenstein's technique. It is not extravagant to conclude that what we have lost was quite possibly his best film until that time.