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Siberiade
(RUSSIAN-70M-COLOR)

Cannes, May 21.

Sovexport release of Mosfilm production. Features entire cast. Director Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky. Screenplay, Valentin Ejev, Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky; camera (Sovcolor), Levan Paatashvili; editor, Valentina Koulaguine; music, Edouard Artemiev. Reviewed at Cannes Film Fest (competing), May 20. Running time: 210 MINS.

- Afanassi Vladimir Smailov
- Nikolai Vitale Solomina
- Anastassia Nathalia Andreitchenko
- Evofoei Erqueni Petrov
- Radian Mikhail Knonov
- Alexei Nikita Mikhalkov
- Taia Ludmila Gourtchenko
- Spiridou Sergei Shakourov

"Siberiade" is a lumbering Soviet epic spanning three generations of two families in a Siberian hamlet from 1900, through 1917, the Russian Revolution, to the '60s. Familiar, often academic, film displays lavish treatment, fine craftsmanship, poetic shafts for festival interest, though it's somewhat long-winded and diffuse for other than specialized, careful placement outside the Socialist bloc.

The saga seems telescoped in spots and it has reportedly been cut down from an original six-hour version. The momentous historical events are indicated by montages of old newsreel and feature footage before they seep slowly down to this backwater town.

A rich family with overbearing children and a poor family with a more humane child are first etched. The poor boy helps an escaped political prisoner who brings some social consciousness to the town before he is apprehended by the police.

The boy is mistreated by the rich girl and the latter even has him run naked in the snow for a little food he wants. Then they grow up and fall in love, but her family refuses to let them marry and he is beaten and set adrift in a small boat.

The revolution comes and the girl runs off to join him. He comes back with a teenage son years later and learns that the girl had been killed.

Murder and revenge follow, and the boy becomes an engineer and looks for oil in his old town. He is finally killed helping people in an oil fire.

Film is visually rich, there are some ecological aspects in the poor boy's father's building a wooden road for communication to somewhere and feeling for the forest. For a Soviet film, there is also a freer treatment of sex and the remnants of the old mystical Russia.

Director Andrei Mikhalkov-Konchalovsky keeps this massive fresco coherent and gets some good performances, especially from half brother Nikita who is last in the line of the poor family, but may have impregnated a woman before his death.

Color goes from more garish hues at the beginning to more metallic ones for the more modern segs. A prestige item that won Russia a special jury prize at the Cannes Fest. —Mosk.