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# How the Chinese Look at the Kurosawa Film 11/3/76

By RICHARD SPRINGER

• Last week's column considered Kurosawa's "Dersu Uzala" from an aesthetic viewpoint. Not mentioned was the political controversy that surrounds the making of the film. The Soviet-Japanese co-production portrays the friendship between a Goldi trapper and a Russian surveyor near the Sino-Soviet border.

It turns out that the Chinese government is very upset with the films on several levels. The whole idea of a Russian officer "chartering the border" at the turn of the century is an anathema to the Chinese. They claim that the Czarist government seized territory by force and pressured the Chinese into unjust treaties during the 19th century. China says that although their border patrols were not "walking" the borders, the Chinese army had always set up "posts" in the bordering areas. The Russians have moved boundary markers to suit themselves, say the Chinese.

China also disputes the portrayal of the kindness shown the Asian trapper by the Russian troops. Minority peoples in the Siberian regions have been persecuted by the Russians and have never cooperated with them, say the Chinese. The Chinese critics also object to Kurosawa's vivid portrayal of the Chinese bandits, who pillage and steal women in the film. The People's Republic feels that the Russians' use of an internationally-known Japanese director to make a film that contains so many subtle propaganda items is a

masterful trick by the Soviets.

None of these criticisms should detract from the universal appeal and stunning visualization of the Kurosawa masterpiece. But it does indicate that it is almost impossible not to make a political film these days. The controversy surrounding "Dersu Uzala" is contagious. Two American distributors are fighting for the rights to the film, but Surf Theatre management hopes to show the film in San Francisco before Christmas.