

NEW YORK TIMES

JAN 28 1964

Soc 4-01-7 USSR (anti-Stalinist)
 Soc 4-02-1 USSR (anti-Stalin movie)

Anti-Stalinist Film Stirs Moscow By Vividly Recalling Purge Era

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Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, Jan. 27—The arrest of a staunch Communist on an informer's charges in the 1949 purge is the central episode in a three-and-half-hour anti-Stalinist film that promises to be one of the major Soviet motion-picture events of the year.

The arrest scene and other incidents close to the life experience of almost every Soviet citizen are expected to have an impact in cinematographic form far exceeding the initial effect of Yuri Bondarev's controversial novel, "Stillness," on which the film is based.

Press reviews and moviegoers' reactions point up the sense of participation evoked by the film, which had its premiere in Moscow's modernistic Rossiya Theater yesterday.

"The great and difficult truth of a large slice of life of our people has been realized convincingly and exactly," Izvestia, the Government newspaper, said.

"The authors of the film have shown us a great and complex segment of our life; they have shown it truthfully and boldly, in the best realistic traditions of our art" was the comment of Pravda, the Communist party paper.

Several hours after viewing the film two Russians shared their feelings with an American.

"They came to arrest me in the early morning hours just as it happened in the movie," a woman in her late 30's said guardedly. "Those scenes of postwar Moscow were scenes of my youth."

A man in his early 40's said: "The film really affected me because I had experiences very much like Sergei."

Sergei Volkhmintsev, the principal hero of the film, is the son of the arrested man. He is ousted from the party for having failed to report his father's arrest. He

leaves the Petroleum Engineers Institute, where he was studying, and goes into virtual exile in a remote desert oil exploration area.

Mr. Bondarev's novel, serialized in the liberal literary journal Novy Mir in 1962, was one of the early examples of anti-Stalinist literature that recalled the all-pervasive atmosphere of the renewed terror of the post-war years.

There were critics who did not like Mr. Bondarev's gloomy novel on the ground that it distorted the past. But others, notably Konstantin Paustovsky, the writer, defended Mr. Bondarev's theme as an integral part of what took place in the Soviet Union during the "cult of personality."

The filmmakers have softened the brutal impact of the novel by adding a sketchy epilogue that brings the lives of the characters from the dark days of 1949 to the new era that began with Premier Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in 1956.

The film also omits scenes of genuine postwar poverty described in the novel as well as Stalinist slogans and statues that were part of the daily scene in those days.

Stalin's name is mentioned only once, but within the limits imposed by the officially approved "socialist realist" approach, Mr. Bondarev and the film's director, Vladimir Basov, who joined in writing the script, have rendered reasonably credible scenes of postwar Moscow that differ sharply from the glossy photography characteristic of many current movies that use the Soviet capital as a background.

The film's title, "Stillness," refers to the comparative silence of civilian life that envelops Sergei, a war veteran, after the roar of battle. It is shot in leisurely style in wide-screen black and white.