

Film Society

By DAVID MACAULAY



Scenes from the UNB Film Society's latest film, ALEXANDER NEVSKY.

The UNB Film Society will be presenting, ALEXANDER NEVSKY on April 4th and 5th at 8:00 p.m. in Tilley Hall auditorium.

This film marked Eisenstein's return to the cinema after a long period of unproductivity: while most of his many cinematic projects of the early '30's simply stalled, in 1935 he was officially reprimanded by the central committee as a "formalist" and forced to take a "holiday". But in 1938, with the menace of fascism growing, the Soviet leaders thought it necessary to rouse the masses to a sense of their own historical development. Virtually unlimited resources were allowed for the production of Alexander Nevsky, a patriotic epic designed to strike the heart of every Russian man, woman and child and to prepare them to meet with a sense of optimism any war that came. It is thus somewhat ironic that the signing of the German-Soviet pact in 1939 made this film highly embarrassing and led to its suppression in the Soviet Union for over a year.

The story is simple, but has been raised to the heroic level in order to give it the necessary mass appeal. In the early 13th century much of Southern Russia had been conquered by Cenghis Khan with his Mongols and Tartars; following this defeat the Teutons in their turn tried to conquer a part of the great Russian territory. Even more cruel than the Tartars, they destroyed all social and religious customs in their conquered territories, massacred with glee and reduced the people to servitude. Novgorod thereupon became the center for national revolt. The Russian princes were led by Alexander Nevsky, prince of Novgorod and the strongest and most intelligent of them all, who had gained immense popular prestige in the previous victories over the Swedes and the Danes. Nevsky receives a delegation from Novgorod and decides to free his people from tyranny.

Alexander Nevsky pulsates with life and is full of humanity. Owing much of the traditions of grand opera, this is a sound film in which little talk is heard; Prokofiev's music forms an integral part of the structure, weaving melody into Eisenstein's brilliant visual effects. Alexander Nevsky is a film of mighty national movement, of great masses of people inspired and united by one idea, an epic that is free from the cynicism and sophistication of modern times.



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