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Mt. Holz Science Fiction Society
 Club Notice - 04/01/90 -- Vol. 8, No. 39.5

MEETINGS UPCOMING:

Unless otherwise stated, all meetings are on Wednesdays at midnight.
 LZ meetings are in HO. MT meetings are in the LZ cafeteria.

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04/1.5 LZ: Monmouth County White Pages

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04/08 Science Fiction Association of Bergen County: TBA
 (phone 201-933-2724 for details) (Saturday)

04/21 NJSFS New Jersey Science Fiction Society: Josepha Sherman
 (phone 201-432-5965 for details) (Saturday)

HO Chair: John Jetzt HO 1E-525 834-1563 hocpa!jetzt
 LZ Chair: Rob Mitchell LZ 1B-306 576-6106 mtuxo!jrrt
 MT Chair: Mark Leeper MT 3D-441 957-5619 mtgzx!leeper
 HO Librarian: Tim Schroeder HO 3D-225A 949-5866 homxa!tps
 LZ Librarian: Lance Larsen LZ 3L-312 576-3346 lzfme!lfl
 MT Librarian: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl
 Factotum: Evelyn Leeper MT 1F-329 957-2070 mtgzy!ecl
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1. In an effort to save money, we will try to discuss books that almost everyone owns. Our next meeting will be a discussion of the Monmouth County phone book, White Pages A-C.

Rob Mitchell's capsule review was: Weak plot, and the characters, although quite numerous, come across as barely more than one-dimensional.

To which Mark Leeper replies: That makes it better than most of what was nominated for a Hugo this year. It is in the best

traditions of Stapledon. True, the characters do not stay around very long, but for each character I felt there was a story that could be expanded into a whole novel. For me the most memorable was Blackburn, Mrs. H. I cannot exactly say why. But I kind of wish more had been done with her role.

THE MT VOID

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Rob also says: Did you notice that, despite the theme of "communication" dominating the book, that children are conspicuously absent? Nary a good role model in the entire book (at least as far as I read); I lost interest about the time Herman M. Meshenberg showed up. By the way, is there any truth to the rumor that the marketeers had a slogan, "You're in his book!" until P. J. Farmer's R_i_v_e_r_w_o_r_l_d publisher complained?

And Charlie Harris adds this: I have it! I have it! (the paperback edition) and I think I've already read parts of it; some of the characters' names look v_e_r_y familiar. So I am prepared to comment on some of the comments that are already flying about. Let me start with Rob's observation [about children]: Sorry to disagree, Rob, but you must have skipped over the following passages, to cite just three:

Aboudi Joseph & Lilly 19 ParkerAvDeal 531-4389
Teenagers Telephone 19 ParkerAvDeal 531-4391
Alexander Earl B Jr 228 PinewoodAvOakhurst 531-1714
Teenagers Telephone 228 PinewoodAvOakhurst 531-8239
Angelini CA 100 LudlowAvSpgLk 449-4763
Teenagers Telephone 100 LudlowAvSpgLk 449-7513

I could go on and on, but this should be sufficient to make my point. It's true the none of the youngsters are identified by name. Indeed, they are represented solely by a frequently-used electronic device (no doubt there is a Greek term for this figure of speech). Nevertheless, this book clearly escapes the charge that "children are conspicuously absent."

And Charlie continues: But what i want to know is this: IS THIS BOOK SCIENCE-FICTION? True, some of the characters have names that sound otherworldly-- but nowhere near as otherwordly as the regular contributors to soc.culture.turkish. Many of the place names look

peculiar, as if they came from a future age in which language had become more compact. Just as the people of 3059 in John W. Campbell's "Twilight" refer to Shkago, Yawk, and Singpor, I notice references here to Shrwsby, Marlbo, Blmr, As Pk, and Ft Mon. And true, there are occasional mentions of enterprises that have an sf ring, such as Galaxy Travel, Dimensions Inc, Time Systems International, and Space Station ("See A Space Station"). Nevertheless, I have yet to encounter any real sf twists to the plot. Will it get better?

Mark Leeper
MT 3D-441 957-5619
...mtgzx!leeper

Wanna buy a duck?

-Joe Penner

IVAN THE TERRIBLE
A film review by Mark R. Leeper
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Capsule review: How better to start April than getting out of the way Eisenstein's great quasi-historical pseudo-epic I v a n t h e T e r r i b l e (Parts I and II)? You won't learn much history but you will be able to tell people you've seen it.

It has come time to review another undiscovered classic of early film. This one shows up on public television every once in a long while but has been completely forgotten by anyone who doesn't watch PBS. The film is really two Soviet films by Serge Eisenstein, I v a n t h e T e r r i b l e (Part I) and I v a n t h e T e r r i b l e (Part II). It is difficult to decide if this is really one film or two. On one hand, when Part I ends it has more loose ends than a golf ball with the skin peeled off. About all that is tied up is the current sentence. Talk about leaving room for a sequel! Eisenstein doesn't just leave r o o m, he leaves the whole house!

An historical note on Eisenstein: he appears to be the only Jew revered by the Soviets since Karl Marx. Apparently he hid his religion by not asking to leave.

As with most films about conflict, the I v a ns tell the story of the unending struggle between pretty people and ugly people, with ugly people being the bad guys. (This struggle may be more recent than we tend to think. In Dickens's time it was more a struggle of people with funny names such as Twist and Nickleby against people with ugly names such as Mr. Scrooge or Miss Zits.) It is only with the more realistic Schwarzenegger and Stallone films of the 1980s that the good guys are ugly too (and in Stallone's case they are making up for lost time).

I v a n t h e T e r r i b l e is the story of how after an ugly becomes Czar he tries to run Russia for the peasants, all of whom are pretty. From a distance Ivan looks ugly: his hair is greasy and slicked down and he looks like he probably has fleas. But it turns out Ivan may not be ugly after all; it may be a plot by his aunt who has a face like a corn-grinding stone. It was probably she who put the Penzoil in his Vitalis.

The film opens with Ivan's coronation, which is more long and expensive than it is interesting, but then that is true of a lot of Russian films. They were made that way to prove to the world that Communism works so well that they can afford to waste film. But you know that Ivan is in big trouble because the place is just teeming with u g l y people. There are a few pretty people who are saying loyal sorts of things, but there are far more uglies and they are not at all happy that Ivan is being crowned. Be warned, however, that some of the pretty people may well turn out to be villains. You will know this is happening when the camera starts showing them in unflattering close-ups.

Ivan the Terrible

April 1, 1990

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Following the coronation there is a reception and banquet that turns out to be the funniest meal on screen since Blake Edwards's T h e P a r t y, except I guess it came before. During the course of a one-hour meal:

1. people plot against Ivan,
2. Ivan's best friend announces he cannot support Ivan and exiles himself,
3. there is a peasants' revolt where they burn the outskirts of the

- city,
4. the peasants storm the palace,
 5. Ivan fights with one peasant in hand-to-hand combat,
 6. Ivan announces he is going to be the People's Czar, in spite of the fact he is ugly,
 7. the peasants return to their homes, the Mongol ambassador arrives and demands tribute,
 8. and Ivan declares war on the Mongols.

And you never get to see the desert.

The second film has some definite stylistic differences from the first film. During the course of making the two films, Eisenstein became more anti-West as time went along. By the time he made the second film the anti-foreigner sentiment is obvious. He puts much more bright light at the bottom of the screen so the subtitles will be almost impossible to read. At the same time, this makes the plot more complex and harder to follow.

I wouldn't say this about Part I, but I v a n t h e T e r r i b l e (Part II) ranks up there with the original P h a n t o m o f t h e O p e r a, the original

H e l l' s A n g e l s, T h e R e t u r n o f D r a c u l a, and S h e' s G o t t a H a v e I t as a film that suddenly goes from black-and-white to color in the middle for no obvious reason. It is quite a shock. Presumably the Soviet economy took an upturn during the shooting. Unfortunately, the blues on the colored stock have been lost to time but the reds are somewhere between vibrant and oppressive, much like Ivan himself. Part II has enough songs to rank almost as a musical and some odd dance numbers, including one around a peasant dressed like the Statue of Liberty.

The two film together are fairly long but the plot is not difficult to follow because it moves so slowly. Other than the banquet scene, in any given fifteen-minute stretch you can be reasonably sure that not much as happened. In fact, even in two films about Ivan, we learn almost nothing about the man or anything he did. The snail-paced plot instead gives plenty of time for meaningful looks and poses. It is as if every frame was intended to be a great--if not very realistic--painting.

In all, I would say that I v a n t h e T e r r i b l e is two classic films you may want to see some time. (Mediocre classics don't get ratings on the -4 to +4 scale.)