



The smoke is real in scenes like this.

attitude. Talent is like money – if you have it, you have it, and if you don't, you don't."

*Trial on the Road* opens with a series of close-ups: peasant faces, their strong Slavic features sharply delineated and wet with falling rain. These are followed by a wide shot made from a crane.

"We brought the rain," Sklansky explained. "We used a fire engine and many water pipes covering a big area. On top of this we used white smoke in the background to expand the rain effect into the distance. We didn't have fog machines so we used special cans of smoke powder. It made a gray diffusion which, in combination with the water, gave us rain. We couldn't backlight because I had such a huge shot after the close-ups, where the small figures pick up shovels and you see them go. The area was so wide that there was no place for backlight, and we couldn't use it for the closeups because they had to match the wide shot.

"We tried to choose a lighting combination that would create a feeling of nature, not like rain in a movie, so we were careful with light. I used only one light on the camera, a 1,000 watt globe for which I designed a special metal reflector that would protect the actor and me from any explosion of the lamp because of the water. This was hooked to a rheostat so I could change the density. The lamp was as close to the lens as

possible to eliminate a shadow, and I made the shadows just a little softer, kicked some light into the eyes, and that was it. We were careful not to over light the existing light and thus lose the effect. The idea was not to show that we used light but to improve the shadows and the eyes. Eyes for me are very important. I used a zoom lens on the tele position, to wash out the background."

Another strong sequence which shows meticulous planning is one which depicts the beginning of the enemy attack on the village. Through a small window we see the face of the hero watching, then from this window the prisoner's POV of two boys building a snow-woman ("We call them snow-women in Russia," Sklansky noted). As the children play, the first explosion occurs. "It's more elegant that way, because you don't expect it," said Sklansky.

He revealed that one scene was inspired by a then-current American film. "In *Bonnie and Clyde*, remember how they were shot at the end, so many bullets? It happens that during the shooting of our movie that we saw *Bonnie and Clyde* and the director said, 'Okay, we'll use it.' I said, 'Wait a minute, it's so well known, it's like a classic!' 'Don't worry,' he said, 'everything will fit into our movie, then it's ours.' And so we stole it. There is an old Russian saying that 'everything new is really very well-forgotten old.'"

One long scene which proved difficult shows a number of men walking or riding horse carts along a road as observed through the telescopic sight of a rifle, which moves from face to face. Sklansky described the making of the scene:

"When we were working during the preparation-discussion time, I came up with the idea to do it in one shot. The director liked it. Our idea as we discussed it was to use a 500mm lens and photograph it normally, like a procession along the road. When we started doing it, we found that the action happened too rapidly to

follow in this manner. Then I decided to put the actors in a circle and have them go in an exact circle around me. I measured the distance precisely with a tape. With a 500 in winter the depth of field was only a couple of feet or a few inches, so we had to keep them in a precise circle maybe 20 feet from the camera. But when I moved from one man to another, they kept moving and I couldn't find them! When you start panning back and forth trying to find an object on 500 you are completely lost, because it's a very long telephoto and you see everything unsharp and you don't know which way to go. Maybe you're one foot above the man's head!

"Fortunately, I had a tripod I created after I once saw an Elemack when Lenfilm was working on a co-production with an outside company. I wanted one, but we didn't have such a system, so it was built. It was a metal cylinder which can be raised in three elements and the cameraman's chair can be rotated around this cylinder. I could lock the seat and camera together and they could be rotated as one unit. So my assistant tied a stick to my chair and was able to turn me to the area where I should be, and then I'd correct it through the camera, then he'd move me again – that was the solution. It was not easy to do, because it's necessary to memorize how to do so many pans and get the timing exactly, because if you are too slow or too fast you lose the effect. It was a challenge and very interesting; everybody on the picture got excited and people liked it. Having to adjust the camera a little during the shot makes it seem more realistic."

His fondness for the zoom lens, Sklansky explained, is predicated upon its judicious use. "A straight zoom is dull and flat. Use it while you're on a crane or dolly and it can make interesting moves. On *Trial* my number one zoom was a 5 to 500, and I had another zoom of 37 to 140. From what was available I tried a Japanese zoom, a French and a Rus-