

Putyovka v Zhizn

("The Road to Life")

U.S.S.R : 1931 : dir. Nikolai Ekk : Mezrabpomfilm

: 121 min

prod: : scr: Nikolai Ekk : dir.ph.: Vasli Pronin

[Mikhail Dzhagofarov](#)

Mikhail Zharov; Maria Gonfa; Tsifan Kyrla; Nikolai Batalov; V. Vesnovsky

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
5922	2	6	1	795	3	-	-	-	-	No	unseen



Source: *London Socialist Film Co-op (2002-2003 season)*

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"An honest drama about the attempts of a young communist to rehabilitate a group of children made homeless by the civil war and fallen into criminality. The film was an enormous success, not least because the director had immersed himself in the social problem and a number of the actors had themselves belonged to that group. Despite the melodramatic opening, the film maintains a character of stark realism. Success came again

in 1957 when the film was released in a re-edited and polished-up version. *** "

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"Moscow street children are rounded up and reformed. A kind of Russian prequel to the *Dead End Kids*, presented with much style. *"

"Judged purely as entertainment the film recedes quickly, as do most Russian films."

- *Variety*

Bloomsbury Foreign Film Guide review:

"In the early 1920s, during the chaotic aftermath of the Civil War, thousands of homeless orphans roam the countryside as vagabonds and petty criminals. At a children's collective, they are rehabilitated and taught a trade. The first Soviet film to be conceived and made as a talkie showed an impressive grasp of the potential of sound, while still using intertitles. Although there were also some remnants of the montage techniques Ekk has learnt from his teacher Eisenstein. The film moved towards a more personalised kind of Soviet cinema. Praised technically and dramatically at home and abroad, today it needs to be seen in its historical context to be fully appreciated."

The Good Film and Video Guide review:

"A once-admired film whose social crusading was considered more important than the plot, which is idiotic. It is set in 1923 and deals with youths left homeless by the war; many of them have become delinquent till sent to a children's collective to learn a trade under the tutelage of Nicolai Batalov. When winter brings the floods and they can no longer get their tools they build a railway. * "

The International Encyclopedia of Film notes:

"...More obviously creative approaches to sound were signalled however by Dziga Vertov's "ENTHUSIASM" or "DONBAS SYMPHONY" (1931)... by Yutkevitch's "THE GOLDEN MOUNTAINS" (1931)... and by Nikolai Ekk's "THE ROAD TO LIFE" (1931), a beautiful, humane study of the abandoned children of the Revolution, in which free use of sound gave no sense of the strain or self-

consciousness generally associated with an unaccustomed medium."

"Originally an actor with Meyerhold and subsequently a documentary director, Ekk is remembered for one film only - the still admirable "THE ROAD TO LIFE" (1931), one of the early Soviet sound films, which dealt with the plight of children abandoned after the Revolution. His subsequent films were "NIGHTINGALE, LITTLE NIGHT-INGALE" (1936, the first Soviet story colour film), "SOROCHINSKI FAIR" (after Gogol, 1939), "A MAY NIGHT" (after Gogol, 1941)."

London Socialist Film Co-op flier review:

" "A Russian propagandist film... red as hell, fierce, exaggerated in method" is how *Cinema Quarterly* in 1932 described "THE ROAD TO LIFE". The film describes a gang of "lawless boys who infested the cities of Russia after the revolution and terrorised the inhabitants". It goes on to show their reform/redemption in a labour commune where "under inspired leadership... they find an outlet for their energy in useful work." The end is not without tragedy, and the reviewer is impressed by the film's unrelenting emotional grip".

[no listing in "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "Classics of the Foreign Film", "The Critics' Film Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. Several sources ascribe shorter running times, presumably taken from the 1957 reissue. The 1955 Soviet film "[PEDAGOGICHESKAYA POEMA](#)" similarly dealt with the reclamation of delinquent street-boys. The USA did not have a violent revolution in the 20th century, yet American cinema of the 30s and 40s returned repeatedly to the problematic of young delinquents and various programmes (as in "[BOYS TOWN](#)") for the salvation of them. Nothing else is known of Mikhail Dzhagofarov.

See subject index under **CRIME / DELINQUENCY**, [EASTERN EUROPE / SOVIET BLOC](#), **PRISON / BORSTAL / REFORM SCHOOL**, **STREET KIDS** and [WAR](#), which encompasses the social aftermath of war.