

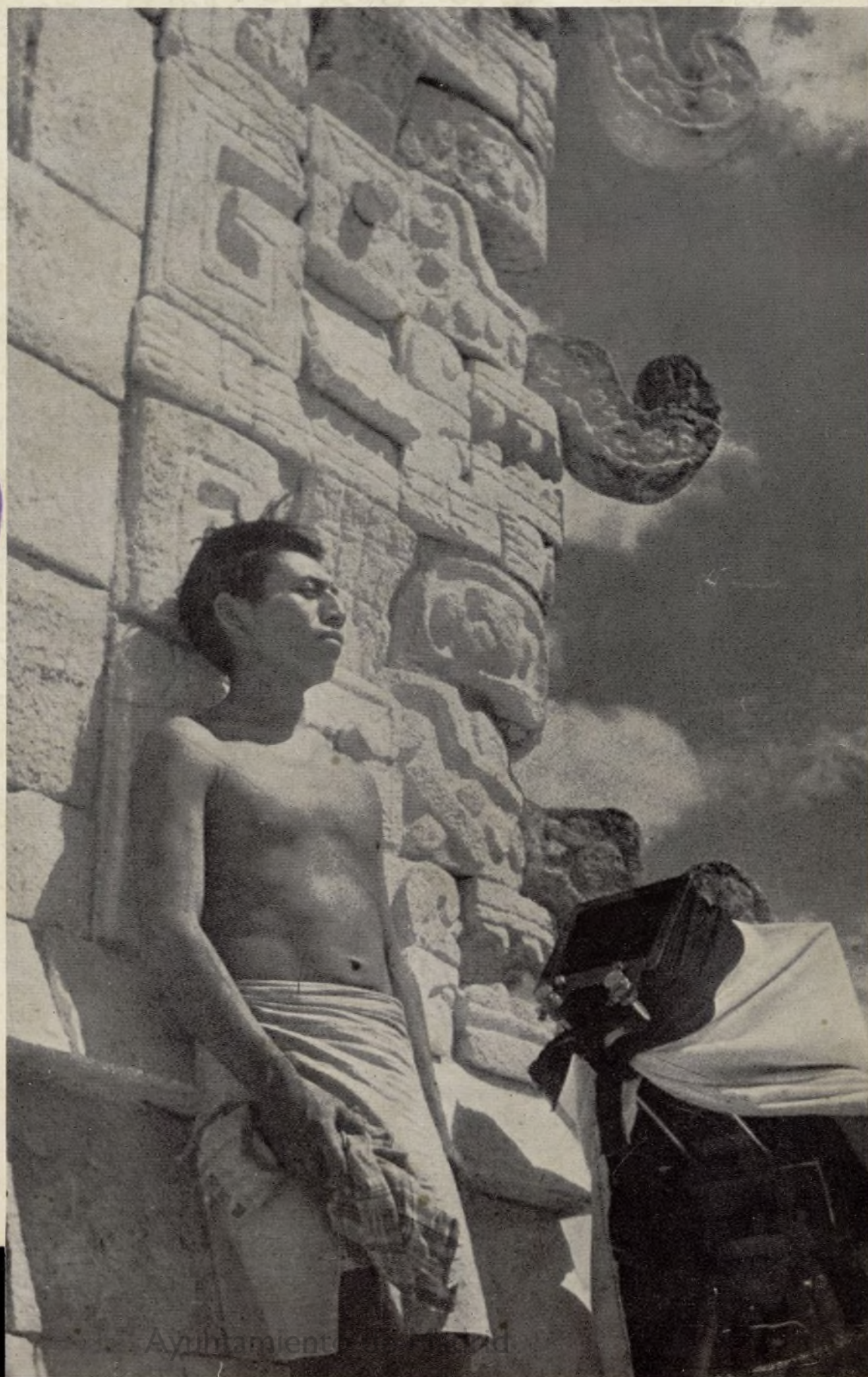
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EXPERIMENTAL

CINEMA

«QUE VIVA MEXICO!»

EISENSTEIN, ALEXANDROV, TISSE



NUMBER

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

AGUSTIN ARAGON LEIVA, a native Mexican by more than 400 years of descent, was Eisenstein's Mexican assistant throughout the production of *Que Viva Mexico!* He served as interpreter for Eisenstein among the various tribes of Mexican-Indians, as guide into the innermost corners of the land, and as adviser on Mexican folklore and history. He is General Secretary of the Mexican Cine Club and has recently published in the leading Mexican magazine, *Contemporaneos*, translations of Eisenstein's essays on film-art.

SERGEI MIKHAILOVITCH EISENSTEIN needs no introduction to the readers of *Experimental Cinema*. His films to date are: *Workers, Strike!*, *The Battleship Potemkin*, *Ten Days That Shook the World* (*October*), *Old and New*, and a two-reel experimental sound-film, *Romance Sentimentale*. The last three pictures were produced by Eisenstein in collaboration with his co-director, G. V. Alexandrov, and all of them were photographed by Eduard Tisse. *Que Viva Mexico!* is an independent film, having no connection with the Mexican, Soviet or American film-industries. It was privately financed by a group of California liberals who admire Eisenstein's work.

MORRIS HELPRIN, a young writer and film-student, went to Mexico several months ago for the purpose of observing Eisenstein at work. Previously connected with the publicity department of United Artists Studios in Hollywood.

BELA BALAZS, an internationally known Hungarian film-theorist and scenarist, is the author of a book originally published in German, *Der Sichtbare Mensch* (*The Invisible Man*), a treatise on the general esthetics of the cinema. He recently published another book, *The Spirit of the Film*, and is now working in the U.S.S.R. on sound-films.

J. M. VALDES-RODRIGUEZ, a young Cuban, has written a number of essays on the economy and politics of Cuba. Some of these essays have appeared in various issues of the foremost Cuban intellectual journal, *La Revista de la Habana*. He has also made several translations of stories and books by John Reed. Valdes-Rodriguez is now studying the cinema and is General Secretary of the Cine Club of Cuba.

M. KAUFMAN is a prominent Soviet film-director. He has made a number of experimental films on the strength of which he evolved the system of montage used in his first feature film, *Spring*. He wrote an essay on *The Evolution of the Soviet Cinema*, published in *Left No. 1*.

ALEXANDER BRAILOVSKY. Born in Russia, took an active part in the Russian liberation movement before, during and after the Revolution of 1905; at the age of eighteen was exiled to Siberia; escaped from the famous "Czar's Prison" in Akatui, on the border of Manchuria; studied in Italy and the Paris Sorbonne; edited Russian dailies in U.S.A.; lately has been devoting himself to studies in the field of musical theory; author of *Fragments from the Russian Suite*. While instructing S. M. Eisenstein and G. V. Alexandrov in the theory of music, became interested in the problems of the cinema; beginning with this issue on the editorial board of *Experimental Cinema*.

SOMERSET LOGAN, writer living in Hollywood, has contributed frequently to *The New Republic*, *The Nation*, etc.

MICHAEL ROSE ROBERTS, formerly of the Merseyside Workers' Film Society, is now in Liverpool producing a documentary film of the dock-workers' condition in that city.

GEORGE W. LIGHTON is a young American born and brought up in Kentucky. Last year, when Eisenstein was in Hollywood, he bummed across the country for the sole purpose of meeting him. Has just returned from a trip to the Harlan-Bell coal fields in Eastern Kentucky, where, he writes, 10,000 striking miners are fighting against capitalist slavery.

WERNER KLINGLER, a film-student and actor, has contributed technical essays to previous numbers of *Experimental Cinema*. Played the part of the captured German war-ace in *Dawn Patrol*, and several important roles in M-G-M foreign versions.

N. SOLEW, Moscow correspondent for *Experimental Cinema*, worked last year in the foreign department of the Inform-Bureau of Soyouskino. Now on the staff of *The Moscow News* and at the same time studying cinematography in Sovkino studios.

LEWIS JACOBS, in New York, is working on the montage of a feature-length documentary film for The Workers' Film and Photo League. Made two short experimental films in 1930.

RALPH BOND is one of the organizers of a proletarian film-group in London. He produced, for this group, a celebrated documentary-film called *1931*. The picture was shown throughout England and was acclaimed by the workers as a vivid depiction of their misery and struggle.

VICTOR P. SMIRNOV is the new head of the Amkino Office in New York City.

G. L. GEORGE, a French newspaper man, is a contributor to *Du Cinema*, *La Revue des Vivants*, *La Courte Paille*, and other European magazines. Recognized in Europe as one of the foremost authorities on Soviet cinema.

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EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA is an advanced American film magazine established to counteract the reactionary political, psychological and conventional formalistic tendencies of the capitalist film industry.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA covers all the basic forms and activities of the cinema, considering film-art as one of the most powerful ideological weapons in the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes and oppressed nationalities.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA *will struggle:*

1. Against the existing monopoly of film-art by Capital
2. Against the subjugation of creative artistic work to the interests and conventional dogmas of the dominant moneyed class
3. Against the suppression from the screen of the most vital and burning social problems and facts of modern life.



EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA *will endeavor:*

1. To make possible in the United States the production of artistic films that will reveal the American scene as it is, without disguising, as the case may be, its brutalities, inequalities and sharp class-division

2. To encourage and stimulate the proletarian film-movement throughout the Western hemisphere
3. To counteract the coarse commercial spirit and purpose of capitalist films
4. To render accessible to film-students important theoretical and technical writings on film-problems, with special emphasis on the theoretical and practical work now being carried on by the film-workers in the Soviet Union and independent groups of cinematographers in other countries.

While popularizing such works as outstanding manifestations of a rising new culture, not based on profit as the motive, EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA will consider bourgeois films insofar as they contain the elements of real life and insofar as they may be of use in helping film-students and film-workers to formulate a richer conception of the problems of cinematography in general.

EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA hopes by its example to stimulate a new spirit in the American theatre and all allied arts as part of the general international movement against capitalist ideology and commercialized esthetics.

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A STATEMENT BY THEODORE DREISER

TO THE EDITORS: I am pleased to send you this short article. The purpose of your magazine, it seems to me, is very worthwhile, and I hope it will have tangible results.

I thoroughly believe in the policy of EXPERIMENTAL CINEMA to encourage movies on the labor movement to be shown specifically to an audience desiring them. One of the paramount needs is the specialized motion picture for particular audiences. As it is today, mass-production in the movies, as in other industries, is lowering the standards. Every person must be dragged down to witness the same inane, commonplace, and totally inartistic pictures.

I believe that independent efforts such as this should be made to further movies dealing with the great historical struggle of labor, its dramatic developments recently in Russia, and with its reaction on the ideas of world labor at large. The man who fights for labor should be portrayed as just to his fellow-workers and hence striving for the common good. If an interested group which has the laborer's welfare at heart does not pursue this, it will not be accomplished. Certainly Big Business Hollywood, with its frenzy for money and sex, or even capital-

ism, which runs Hollywood, will never do anything for the worker.

Furthermore, Hollywood enjoys the support of the United States government in the making of military films to further a capitalism which takes all it can from the laborer.

Great pictures of the class struggle deserve encouragement. Americans should witness them and hence understand the idea of class vs. class. But no, this is not allowed in the United States. Instead, boycott! "Mother," the film from Gorki's masterpiece, a novel by the same name, has already been banned here, and such film-masterpieces as "Storm Over Asia" and "The End of St. Petersburg," by Pudovkin, have been only partially released, or abridged. Such boycotts and bans should be resisted and any law prohibiting the showing of these films should be protested in the one way people have of showing their disfavor of a certain statute—by breaking it. These great labor movements must reach the laborer by way of the films.

THEODORE DREISER

EISENSTEIN'S FILM ON MEXICO

Subject of the Film

Projecting the concrete into the abstract, a greater generalization: the subject of the film had to be a selection of the fundamental elements of the Mexican drama.

Therefore, it deals:

with all our historical and prehistorical periods, with our main geographical sections that have remarkably conditioned collective life, and with all influences that are foreign.

So, the subject of the film is

the whole Mexico. Past, present and future.

As ages in Mexico are not in a vertical sequence, but in a horizontal development, spread out like an unusual fan.

Time of the Action

Being ideal, the construction, considered as a whole time, is dissolved in a combination of epochs. But on quite a few occasions it becomes definite.

Structure of the Film

Like a symphony, in which different movements are unified in spirit and form through the expression of the same IDEA of a superior order.

Technique

The cinematographic melodies have their own counterpoint and every one requires a different harmonization.

In this fashion there are as many rhythms, graphic compositions and photographs, and finally, montages, as there are parts in the film.

Conflicts

Spontaneity, or nature in itself—

Man with nature

Man with man

and the emphasis of the conflict between the two principal geographical sections of the country—the tropics and the high lands, where air is subtle as the breath of a blythe spirit and life is hard.

Each one producing different cultures, habits, types, problems and struggles.

But both of them the same in the final result produced by revolution, through which the Mexican people has striven to build up its collective unity—and still is striving.

Conclusion

The film is a poem of a sociological character. Rather an interpretative essay on Mexican evolution.

By its deep significance and form, I consider it a new type of *genre* in cinematography, with no antecedents, and achieving perfection at once. Also a film very difficult to surpass and even to imitate.

The elements described

Eisenstein uses about three thousand different elements:

all distinctive and important types of Indians, Meztizos, Spaniards,

Europeanized and Americanized Mexicans, genuine *costumes* and multifarious combinations of them with background, illuminations and faces...

architecture—primitive, Mayan, Aztec, Toltec, etc.

colonial Spanish at the periods corresponding to three hundred years...

all tropical landscapes on both coasts, so combined as to look just like a tropic splendid beyond literary description and never seen on the screen before.

the desert, the sacred snow-peaked mountains, woods, rivers and the two oceans, animals of every kind, especially monkeys, the plants that symbolize human struggle. So,

he uses:

palm trees of about twenty types, the Maguey plant in the most plastic variety, the Henaquen plant, the virile cactus (organs)

every one correlated to the group-drama it conditions:

bull-fights

ritual dances

chiefs

skeletons, the very counterpoint of the play when combined with:

toys.

Besides this:

Predominance of women, or matriarchate;

the dominion of men,

confusion.

And an infinite variety of combinations of the above-listed elements.

In this way Eisenstein has practically stolen from the Mexican nation all her secrets, dreams and feelings accumulated during five thousand years.

But all this looks very monumental. The interesting fact to be noticed lies in the choice of materials. Eisenstein has selected only the genuine, the pure, the refined, the generical, because he has a wonderful taste. So he rejects the exotic, which has been the passion of all tourists and superficial writers who have visited Mexico in the last hundred years.

Eisenstein has proven to be the greatest bandit of our beauty!

He deserves capital punishment. We should burn him at the stake!

If we don't do it, we should at least leave him to the rage of the legion of his imitators and followers who are going to find out that he sucked up everything and left nothing to their craving for the exotic.

Some Details

He shows actual primitive life as a paradise, and

* Agustin Aragon Leiva was special assistant to Eisenstein on the production, serving in the capacity of guide, interpreter and adviser on Mexican folklore and history. The above interpretation of the film has been authorized by Eisenstein.

this can be verified by anyone at Tehuantepec, for instance.

And just after this delightful impression he shows the contrast of the hard life of the high plateaus, so near to the skies, where beauty endures, but there is no abundance and pain dominates.

We are sad, tragedy beats our emotion; we are suffering. Then, just like in Beethoven's symphonies, the *scherzo* comes.

There is joy, and external overadorned beauty, gayety, fiesta, celebrations, love.

We are happy, we feel adoration toward the magnificence of life.

Then... humor... irony... sarcasm... and we get back to reality

Tragedy stills...

Revolution is on the wheel...

Here, the Greek conception of the theatrical,—but the chorus are desert steppes, calcinated mountains, the sound of machine-guns. We get to despair.

Finale... The suffering of men upon Earth is not without an aim or a positive result. We return to happiness, an ideal happiness, that we wish for and that maybe we shall never see. But it exists. The Mexican revolution has to lead Mexicans to a place where they can rest in peace, working and fighting for the new order.

We see that in this film Eisenstein displays every kind of emotion: the religious, the mystic, the solemn, the dramatic and the melodramatic, the frivolous, the tragic, the humorous and the ironical, the sarcastic. But all is shaped in lyrical moulds. The sensual appeal of his film is astonishingly great.

Philosophy

We must use this mysterious word to designate the profound significances that involve some parts of the film.

Eisenstein looks for collective expression and we

cannot find these in contemporary art. Primitive mentality, primitive life, call our attention to these collective expressions. Because in the corresponding art, every trace, each detail, conveys a transcendental collective meaning. Subjective art, or so-called "art," imitates this achievement only in external appearances. But nothing is left for the fetishistic significance that is transmissible and understandable for everybody.

Eisenstein has realized this in a startling way and we must look through his whole picture for this inner significance. I think that only a few will get it. Because symbolism of this kind is not detectable at first sight. For instance, there is a sharp connection between the thing portrayed in the maguey episode and the shape of this plant. Both relate to the predominance of men in the corresponding society group. And the whole composition follows the indications of this shape.

This is why Eisenstein sometimes looks to me as if he were thousands of years old!

And

I think that Eisenstein has brought bad luck to my country. We Mexicans are going to live eternally ashamed of our sins against ourselves. We had not realized how great and profound is our tradition, our life, our beauty. We were looking for cheap importations of the exotic. Despite the fact that we had a legion of heroes of our own discovery. But they were Mexicans and got immersed in the whole panorama and at the same time sank into oblivion. Now Eisenstein has signaled a road, but we feel too poor, feeble and discouraged to follow his steps. For many years the Mexican land shall be dominated by intellectual sterility. Probably we'll wake up when the film of Eisenstein shall be only a memory of the past.

For he has practically stolen all the beauty of our country!

Mexico City, November 7, 1931.

THE PRINCIPLES OF FILM FORM

According to Marx and Engels

The dialectic System is only the conscious reproduction of the dialectic flow (Existence) of the external events of the world.

Thus:

The projection of the dialectic system of things
—into the mind—
—into abstract shapes—
—into thoughts—
yields dialectic thought-methods—dialectic materialism
PHILOSOPHY

And similarly:

The projection of the same system of things
—into concrete shapes—
—into forms—
yields ART

The basis of this philosophy is the dynamic comprehension of things:

Being—as a constant Becoming
from the interaction of two contrasting opposites.

Synthesis, arising
from the opposition between Thesis and Antithesis.

In the same degree the dynamic comprehension of things is basic for the correct understanding of Art and all Art-forms.

In the realm of Art this dialectic principle of dynamics incarnates itself in

CONFLICT

as the fundamental basic principle of the substance of every Art-work and every Art-form.

For Art is always Conflict

1. In accordance with its social function.
2. In accordance with its substance.
3. In accordance with its methodology.

1. In accordance with its social function—

For:

The task of art is—the bringing to light of the conflicts of the Existing. By the awakening of conflicts in the observer. The emotional forging of a correct intellectual concept by the dynamic collision of the contrasted passions.

The formation thus of correct perception.

2. In accordance with its substance—

For:

In its substance it consists of a conflict between Natural Existence and Creative Impulse. Between Organic Inertia and Purposive Initiative.

Hypertrophy of the purposive impulse—the principle of rational logic—causes the Art to freeze to a mathematical technicalism.

(A landscape becomes a blue-print, Saint Sebastian becomes an anatomical map.)

Hypertrophy of organic naturalism—organic logic—drowns the Art in formlessness.

(Malevitch—becomes Kaulbach
Archipenko—a waxworks show.)

Because:

The limit of organic form
(the passive Existence-principle) *is NATURE.*

The limit of rational form
(the active Production-principle) *is INDUSTRY.*

AND:

On the point of intersection between
Nature and Industry stands ART.

1. The Logic of Organic form
against

2. The Logic of Rational form

Yields in collision the

Dialectic of Art-form

*The interaction of the two engenders and conditions
Dynamism*

(Not only in the space-time sense—but also in the purely conceptual field. I regard the appearance of new concepts and precepts in the conflict between usual appearance and special representation as exactly a dynamic-dynamisation of the perception—a dynamisation of the “traditional apprehension” into a new apprehension.)

The degree of distance determines the intensity of the tension.

(See, for example, in Music the concept of interval. Here there can be instances where the distance of separation is so wide that it leads to a shattering by breakage of the singleness of the Art-apprehension. The incapacity to be heard of certain Intervals.)

The form of this dynamics in space and time is Expression.

The tension-stages—are Rhythm.

This is true of every Art-form, indeed yet more, for every form of expression.

Similar is the conflict in Human Expression, between conditioned and unconditioned reflexes.

And exactly similarly is the same true in every field, in so far as it can be comprehended as an Art: thus, for example, Logical Thought also, considered as an Art, shows the same dynamic mechanics:

“The intellectual life of a Plato or a Dante becomes in high degree conditioned and nourished by his pleasure in the simple beauty of the rhythmic relation between rule and example, between kind and individual.” (G. Wallas, “The Great Society.”)

So also in other fields. E.g., in speech, where the sap liveness and dynamism arise from the irregularity of the detail in relation to the rule of the system as a whole.

In contrast is the sterility of expression of the artificial, altogether regular languages, as, for example, Esperanto.

From the same principle is derived the whole charm of poetry, the rhythm of which arises as a conflict between the metric measure and the distribution of accents, confusing this measure.

Even a formally static appearance is capable of comprehension as a dynamic function dialectically, as is imaged in the sage words of Goethe, that:

"Architecture is frozen music."

To a comprehension of this type we shall return later.

And just as, in the case of a single ideology (a monistic viewpoint) the whole, as well as the last detail, must be penetrated by the one single principle—

So there ranges itself with the Conflict of Social Conditionality, and with the Conflict of Substance Existing, the same Conflict-principle as keystone of the Methodology of Art. As foundation principle of the rhythm yet to be created and the appearing of the Art-form.

3. In accordance with its methodology—

Here we shall consider the general Art-problem in the individual example of its highest form—Film form.

The Shot and Montage—are the basic elements of the Film.

MONTAGE

The Soviet film has established it as the nerve of the Film.

To determine the nature of Montage is to solve the specific problem of the Film.

The film-makers of old, and also the theoretically quite antiquated Lev Kuleshov, considered Montage as a means of bringing something before the spectator, in describing the something, by sticking the separate shots one upon the other like building-blocks.

The movement in each shot and the consequent length of the pieces is then to be considered as rhythm. A conception entirely false.

The determination of a given object solely in accordance with the nature of its external flow; the valuation of the mechanical sticking-together process as a principle.

We must not describe such a length-relationship as rhythm.

From it there results a measure as opposite to rhythm, properly considered, as the mechanical-metric Mensendiek system is opposite to the organic rhythmic Bode school in matters of bodily expression.

According to this definition, shared as a theoretician even by Pudovkin, Montage is the means of *unrolling* an idea on the shot separate pieces (The Epic Principle).

According to my opinion, however, Montage is not an idea recounted by pieces following each other, *but an idea that arises in the collision of two pieces independent of one another.* (The Dynamic Principle.)

("Epic" and "Dynamic" in the sense of methodology of form, not of content or action.)

As in Japanese hieroglyphics, where two independent ideographical signs ("Shots"), placed in juxtaposition, explode to a new concept.

Thus: Eye + Ear = To weep
Door + Ear = To eavesdrop
Child + Mouth = To cry
Mouth + Dog = To bark
Mouth + Birds = To sing
Knife + Heart = Sorrow

(Abel Rémusat: "Recherches sur l'origine de la formation de l'écriture chinoise.")

A sophism? Certainly not!

For here we seek to define the whole nature of the principal part and spirit of the film from its technical (optical) basis.

We know that the phenomenon of movement in the Film resided in the fact that two motionless images of a moving body following one another in juxtaposition, blend into each other after sequential showing in movement.

This vulgar description of what occurs as a blending has its share of responsibility for the vulgar comprehension of the nature of Montage quoted above.

Let us examine more exactly the course of the phenomenon we are discussing, how it really occurs, and draw conclusion from it.

Two shot immobilities next to each other result in the arising of a concept of movement.

Is this accurate? Pictorially-phrasologically yes. But mechanically the process is otherwise.

For, in fact, each sequential element is shot not *next* to the other, but *on top* of the other.

FOR: The movement-percent, (or feeling) arises in the process of the *superposition* on the *received* impression of the first position of an object of the *becoming-visible* new position of the object.

Thus, by the way, arises the phenomenon of spacial depth, as optical superposition of two surfaces in stereoscopy.

From the superposition of two measures of the same dimension always arises a new, higher dimension.

As in the case of stereoscopy the superposition of two not identical two-dimensionality results in stereoscopic three-dimensionality.

In another field:

A concrete word (a designation) set by the side of a concrete word yields an abstract concept.

As in Japanese, (see above), when a *material* ideogram set in juxtaposition to a *material* ideogram connotes a *transcendental* result (a concept).

The contour incongruence of the first picture, already penetrated into consciousness, and the now actually being accepted second picture—the conflict of the two—engenders the movement-feeling, the percept of the flow of a movement.

The degree of incongruence conditions the impression-intensity, conditions the tension, which, in conjunction with that following, becomes the real element of the peculiar rhythm.

Here we have, temporally, what we see arise spacially on a graphic or painted surface.

In what consists the dynamic effect of a painting?

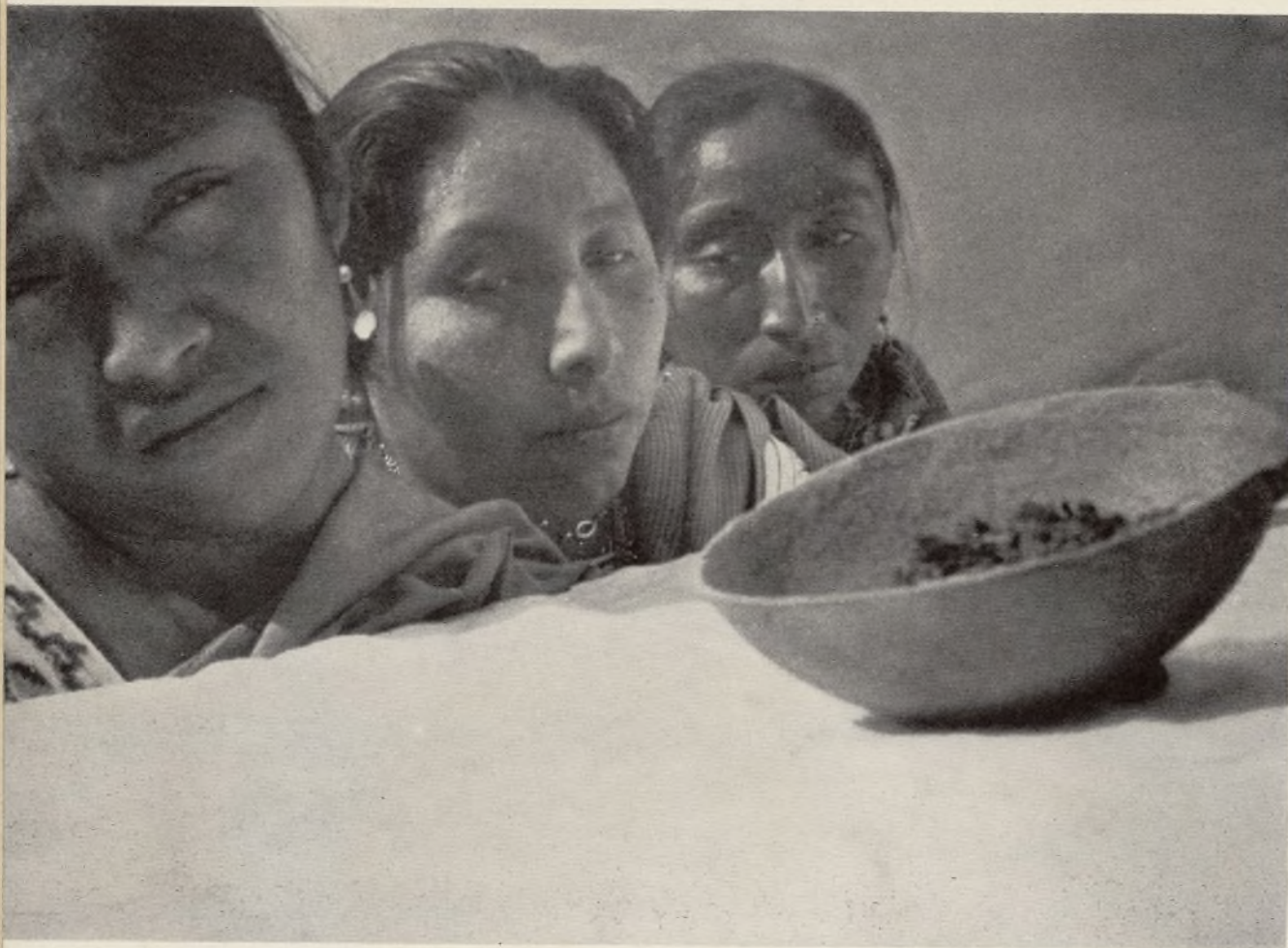
The eye follows the direction of an element. Receives an impression, which then collides with that derived from following the direction of a second element. The conflict of these directions builds the dynamic effect in the apprehension of the whole.

I. It may be purely linear: Fernand Leger. Suprematism.



Martin Hernandez, 21-year-old Mexican-Indian peasant, native of Apam, the principal character in the second story of "QUE VIVA MEXICO!", episode entitled "MAGUEY."
Photo by Jimenez. Courtesy S. M. Eisenstein Collective Productions.

Ayuntamiento de Madrid



Mexican women mourning over the coffin of the dead boy. From the "Magney" episode.



*The Mayan Indians—
a funeral ceremony*

II. It may be "anecdotal." The secret of the marvelous mobility of the figures of Daumier and Lautrec resides in the fact that the various anatomical parts of the body are represented in spacial circumstances (positions) temporally various.

(see, e. g., Lautrec's "Miss Cecy Loftus.")

Logically developing the position A of the foot, one builds a body position A corresponding to it. But the body is represented from knee up already in position A + a. A cinematic effect is here already provided for the motionless picture. From hips to shoulders is already A + a + a. The figure seems alive and kicking.)

III. Between I and II lies primitive Italian Futurism.

"The Man with Six Legs in 6 Positions." (Between I and II. For II obtains its effects with retention of natural unity and anatomical integrity. I, on the other hand, with pure elementary elements, but III, although repudiating naturalism, has not yet pressed forward to the abstract.)

IV. It may also be of ideographic kind. Thus the pregnant characterisation of a Sharaku (Japan—18th Century). The secret of his utmost refinement strength of expression lies in the anatomical and spacial disproportion of the parts. (II might be termed temporal disproportion). This is discussed by Julius Kurth ("Sharaku"). He describes the portrait of an actor, comparing it with a mask:

"..... While the mask has been constructed according to fairly accurate anatomical proportions, the proportions of the portrait are simply impossible. The space between the eyes comprises a width that makes mock of all good sense. The nose is almost twice the as long, in relation to the eyes, as any normal nose would dare to be, the chin stands in no sort of relation to the mouth.....

"The same observation may be made in all the large heads of Sharaku. That the master was unaware that all these proportions are false is, of course, out of the question. He has repudiated normality with full awareness, and, while the drawing of the separate parts depends on severely concentrated naturalism, their proportions have been subordinated to considerations purely ideal." (Pp. 80, 81.)

The spacial extension of the relative size of one detail in correspondence with another, and the consequent collision between the proportions designed by the artist for that purpose—result in the *characterisation* of—the *comment* upon—the represented person.

Finally—Colour. A colour tone imparts to our vision a given rhythm of vibration. (This is not to be taken figuratively, but actually physiologically, for colours are distinguished from one another by the number of their vibrations).

The adjacent colour tone is in another rate of vibration.

The counterpoint (conflict) of the two—the received and the now supplanting vibration rates—yields the dynamism of the apprehension of Colour-play.

Hence we have only to make a step from visual vibrations to acoustic and we stand in the field of Music.

From the domain of the spacial-visual.

To the domain of the temporal-visual.

Here the same law obtains. For counterpoint is, in Music, not only the composition-form, but paramountly the factor basic for every possibility of tone perception and differentiation.

It may almost be said that here, in every case we have cited, we have seen in force the same *Principle of Comparison*, making possible for us, always and in every field, definition and perception.

In the fluid image (the Film) we have, so to speak, the synthesis of these two counterpoints. From the image the spacial and from music—the temporal. In the Film, and characterising it, occurs what we may describe as:

VISUAL COUNTERPOINT

The application of this expression to the film opens up several straight lines to the problem, indication of a sort of Film-Grammar.

In fact, a syntax of Film externals, in which the visual counterpoint conditions a whole new system of external forms. And for all this:

As *Basic Preliminaries*:

The Shot is not an Element of Montage.

The Shot is a Montage Cell (or Molecule)

In this sentence is the leap of the dualistic division in analysis:

From: Title and Shot

And: Shot and Montage.

Instead of this they should be considered dialectically as three various *form phases*—of *one single expressive task*.

With single characteristics, conditioning the singleness of their construction laws.

Interdependence of the three:

A conflict within a thesis (abstract idea)—

1. formulates itself in the dialectics of the Title.

2. projects itself spacially in the interior conflict of the Shot.

3. explodes with increasing intensity in the inter-shot Conflict-Montage.

In full analogy, once more, to human-psychological expression.

This is—Conflict of Motive. Comprehensible equally in three phases:

1. Pure verbal utterance. Without intonation. *Speech* expression.

2. Gesticulatory (mimic-intonational) expression.

Projection of the conflict onto the whole externally active body-system of man. "Gesture" and "Sound-gesture" (Intonation).

3. Projection of the conflict into the spacial field. With the increasing intensity, the zig-zag of mimic expression expands, in the same distortion formula, into the surrounding space. An expressive zig-zag, arising from the space-cleavage of the man moving himself in space.

Herein lies the basis for an entirely new comprehension of the problem.

Film-form. As example of Conflicts one may instance:

1. Graphic Conflict
2. Conflict of Planes
3. Conflict of Volumes
4. Space Conflict
5. Lighting Conflict
6. Tempo Conflict, etc., etc.

(Here each is listed by its principle-feature, its dominant. Of course, it is understood that they occur chiefly as complexes, dovetailing into one another. As with Shots, so, correctly, with Montage.)

For transition to Montage, it suffices for any example to divide into two independent primary pieces.

How far the conception of Conflict leads in dealing with Film-forms is indicated by the following further examples:

7. Conflict between a Material and its Angle (attained by special distortion through camera position).

8. Conflict between a Material and its Spatial Nature (attained by optical distortion through the lens).

9. Conflict between a Process and its Temporal Nature (attained by slow-motion and speeding-up).

and finally

10. Conflict between the whole Optical Complex and some quite other sphere.

Thus does Conflict between Optical and Acoustical impulses produce:

The SOUND FILM

which is capable of being realized as

Visual—Sound Counterpoint

The formulating and consideration of Film appearance as forms of Conflict yield the first possibility of devising a *single system of visual dramaturgy* covering all general detail cases of the problem.

Of devising a dramaturgy of visual Film-form as precise as the existing precise dramaturgy of Film-narrative.

Zürich, 2/11/29

Translation by Ivor Montagu in Hollywood, Calif.

"QUE VIVA MEXICO!"

Eisenstein in Mexico

"Que Viva Mexico!"

It is the first film made in the Western hemisphere to assume the mantle of maturity. The furthest step yet from the idiocies of corn-fed Hollywood. It turns its tail up at the banal; thumbs its nose at the benign. It is pictorial rhetoric of such vital force that it thunders and roars. Yet it contains every aspect of the popular cinema.

"QUE VIVA MEXICO!"

That day at Los Remedios, when we walked over the hills in search of a suitable location, served as an indication of Eisenstein's preciseness, his exciting demands that his subject be even in quality. All Mexico around us was "beautiful enough to swoon in." Here was no prettiness of the postcardy cinema, none of your oak-panelled pictures that need but sprinklings of chemical brilliants to turn them into revolting chromos. The top of a mountain and an ancient aqueduct jutting at a seven-thousand foot height into a stilled canopy of swan-white clouds. You could set your camera down at almost any spot and grind. And have a beautiful scenic.

But the Russian, followed hastily by Tisse, his cameraman; Aragon, a young Mexican intellectual who serves as a guide, interpreter and go-between, a camera boy and myself, trailed by five peons who were the day's actors at a peso each, led a frantic chase to find THE spot. Following which were at least a dozen of THE spots.

Eisenstein was introduced to Mexico by his Mexican friend, the film-student, Agustin Aragon Leiva, whose forebears took root 400 years ago and whose love for his country is as intense as Eisenstein's love for the cinema. Through this young Mexican and other friends of the Russian, Mexico was thrown practically into Eisenstein's lap. There is hardly anything in the country not at his disposal.

Toiling in the sun from early in the morning, through the noon that is characteristically Mexican with its burning heat, until the landscape began to cool, we dragged Christ from the church to lie, pathetically unaware of Eisenstein, staring at the blue bowl that is Heaven, while a machine recorded its image on revolving celluloid. Poor Father who art not in Eisenstein's heaven, hallowed be thy name now, for who knows how you will be used eventually in this record of living Mexico!

A fine Christ the largest statue was. Brought from Spain with blood painted beautifully down his sides and a slot, like openings into which one inserts nickels, carefully chiselled in the thinnish chest. And the beard, fine pictorially, stylized into a Grecian combing with decorative loops. The whole, sprinkled with the dusts of decades that have filtered beneath the crevices of

the glass covering, lay on purple silk in the open courtyard, while the populace of Los Remedios gathered in appropriate awe—awe and reverence in spite of the boy who ordinarily pulled the bell ropes in the steeple, but who now insisted on passing wind against a nearby tombstone and who mingled his derisive laughter with the reverberations of his gaseous intestine.

And the padre, inducing a member of his flock to shed a pearly tear on the statue as the camera ground on. And the two little girls who sold votive candles who were recruited for the scene but who fled at the last minute, showing up later on the roof, beshawled and still timid before this Frankenstein monster.

"Perhaps," says the padre, "we could have some enlarged pictures of this for the members of my parish?"

And Eisenstein assenting a too-ready "yes."

No food for us during the day's work except a bottle of warm beer that was as quickly spat out at the flies.

No rest while Eisenstein sees light in the skies. After eleven months of it he is as active in his picture-making as during the first days. What significance fatigue, when this will be the first film made on the American Continent worth preserving for its sociological import? What are the dangers of jungle, mountain, or sea, when you coincidentally explore human nature?

How can men like Carleton Beales, Stuart Chase and the like, live and travel in a country for months, years, without sensing what the Russian grasped in so short a while? How can writers who have lived decades in Mexico publish learned and boring works on the country without so much as nodding in the direction of certain Mexican fundamentals? Chase regurgitates a literary catalogue that tells about an isolated community, hardly representative of Mexico, which, because its bandstand is like a bandstand of another township, is labelled the "Middletown" of Mexico. He wonders naively about silk stockings, radios and autos. Beales' connection with Mexican officialdom would never permit an undistorted view of conditions as they exist.

Yet Eisenstein walks in and senses the basic force that motivates Mexican life and that will eventually be the prompting means of securing freedom. He has recognized the part that woman plays in the social and economic life of the country and around this has constructed his film.

As an admirer of the work of Rivera, the Diego Rivera who is now accepting fabulous sums for painting frescoes in America, his cinematic work was first influenced by that painter's representations. The fiesta,

the flowers, the color and the action were of prime importance in the early stages of filmization, but one wonders, after hearing of the change, whether or not Eisenstein's film will not more closely resemble the lower-keyed work of Orozco whose sympathies are more clearly defined, less prettified with paint, and hardly sentimental journeys in line.

Eisenstein, the newcomer, the enthusiast, has tried to make the most of a beauty and a glory that are rarely matched elsewhere on the face of the globe. As his work progressed his story developed and he made the discovery that served as a thread upon which he has hung his episodes.

This discovery, namely, Eisenstein's recognition of the importance of woman's position in that country as in no other in the world, converted his film from a dimensionalized fresco to the presentation of a sociological problem as old itself as Mexico and as important as its breath of life. In reality, woman makes no appearance in the film except in a few secluded instances. But her influence is as subtle as the Indian's overconquest and swallowing-up of his Spanish conqueror.

The peon is ruled by his wife, the soldier goes to war but refuses to fight unless his wife is with him. There particularly is woman important, for sometimes she is the advance guard, going forward to prepare a town for the force's comfort, sometimes, when there is fighting, bringing up the rear with consolation and ministering presence.

Mexico City politicians are frequently judged by their mistresses. It is common practise there to have both wife and mistress, one with a complete knowledge of the other.

In Tehuantepec the woman is absolute, not only ruling, but doing the heavy work as well, while the husband dozes at home, happy for the first time to be unleashed from the fetters of responsibility.

With the female's importance in mind and the physical beauty of the country to consider on the other hand, a beauty bewildering in its variety, ranging from tropical to frigid country, Eisenstein had to combine the elements into a whole that would appeal in subject matter as well as pictorial beauty. Eisenstein's secret is his universality—his appeal to the man in the street as well as the man of letters.

He therefore divided his picture into five irregular parts. The fifth and last episode will also serve as an epilogue. There is a prologue as well. All this will be included in a single film of 9 or 10 reels.

The first part he may call "*Tehuantepec: Paradise*." It is here, a tropical province of cocoanut palms, verdant fields, and easy living, that woman is absolute. She tills the fields, barter in the market place and rules the home. Her husband is a procreative force and no more.

The matchless carriage of the Tehuantepec woman, together with her beauty of form, due to the heavy objects she has carried on her head for generations, is a pictorial poem in itself. A supple body with strong conical breasts and a straightness of limb ascribed only to the ancients. Such characters pervade the reels.

The second episode is "*Maguey*." In it Eisenstein has stressed man's supremacy, but indicated his reliance upon his female counterpart. The entire sequence oc-

curs on a farm which in virility of landscape is in complete contrast with that of the preceding chapter. Here a phallic symbolism is engaged to emphasize the complete masculinity of the terrain. He accents the stem of the maguey, the upright stripes of the peon's zarape (the shawl-overcoat-blanket of the native), the unmistakable masculine strength of the land where a living is wrested by force only.

With the maguey plant, which sometimes rises to ten foot heights, as a thematic runner, his drama is enacted against a background of twin volcanos. The cruel charros, attired in their silver-bangled vests, swinging henaquen lassoes, ride their prancing mounts over the head of the boy who has been planted alive, chin deep, on a flat-topped mound.

The third part may be called "*Romance*," the lull before the storm. In this part Eisenstein's satirical thrusts will penetrate and puncture a pretty affair about a bull fighter and his love for another man's wife. It is the interlude in preparation for the ensuing drama which is a turgid, seething account of revolution—all revolution,—not alone of Mexico, but extending through the ages in which man has arisen from his stocks to brandish the torch. It is laid in Mexico, but its import is much more universal.

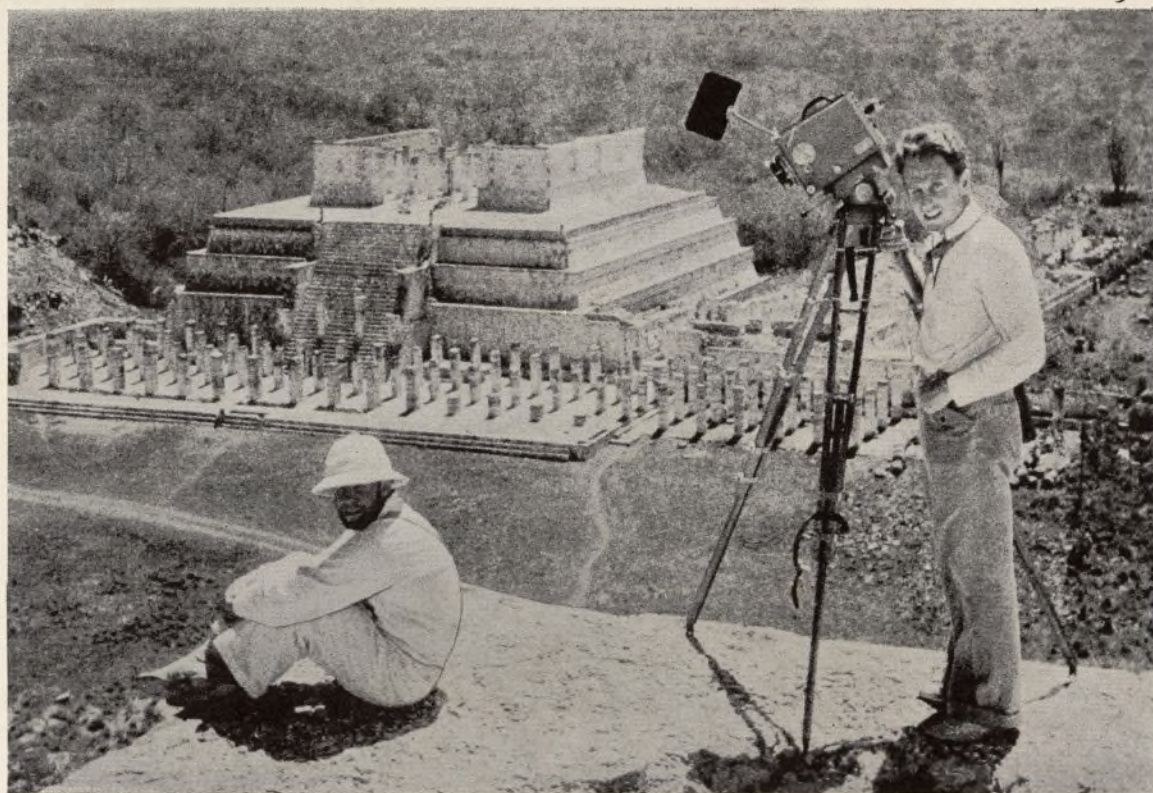
And following this is a promise of a perfect Mexico—one without strife, want, incipient bloodshed. This is a sort of liqueur. You take it or leave it. You can always ignore the dessert.

Whether purposely or not, Eisenstein has so completely covered Mexico that it will be difficult for another picture-director to enter the country and make a scene without repeating. The locales are so varied as to permit any form of life and existence and, taking full advantage, the Russian runs the gamut. Mexico harbors romance and glamor, and cruelty and privation. There are tropics, mountains, deserts, jungles. The director has traversed it from one section to another. All this is in the picture, pieced together, as only Eisenstein can do it.

This man with two others, one of whom grinds a simple camera, has completely thrown off the fetters of the Hollywood system of picture-making, and has exploited Mexico thoroughly in a manner never done before, having been aided on all sides because this time the exploitation is all to Mexico's advantage.

Comparative working costs are interesting to note. The day's work at Los Remedios cost but very few dollars. His equipment consisted of a 400-foot load French-made camera, two gilded reflectors and five actors, each earning one peso (38 cents at the current rate). Transportation cost a few more pesos. Add to this the incidental developing, printing and negative costs together with the cutting and final duplication, and the sum total is surprisingly small. Naturally, there are days when hundreds of persons will be engaged for scenes and the costs soar accordingly, but for the most part the expenses are negligible.

In Hollywood the same business would have entailed transportation for the stars and directors; two or three cameras, artificial illumination if necessary, overhead at the studio that covers a multitude of such sins as publicity, props, advertising, costumes, etc., etc. Somebody's system is basically at fault.



S. M. Eisenstein and G. V. Alexandrov on the ruins of Chichenita, in Yucatan, Mexico. (1931)

Eisenstein and Tisse preparing a shot on the Pyramids of Teotihuacan, Mexico.



*On the Hacienda Tetlapayac:
Work hymn of the Mexican
workers. Daily ceremony
at dawn.*



Eisenstein says that the cinema is the representative art of today as painting was of yesterday. He has already buried painting. He explains the growth in attendance at art exhibits as a result of publicity and additional newspapers devoting more space to them, and not as a manifestation of a naturally stimulated life. He says he knows how to do nothing but work at motion pictures.

But he forgets for the moment the monastic seclusion into which he retires on occasion to work on his volume of esthetics which will devote a sufficient amount of space to the heretofore sorrowfully neglected cinema.

He also forgets his interest in mathematics (that day as Los Remedios when he had to wait ten minutes for something, he drew out of his pocket a paper-backed Russian volume on higher mathematics and in a moment was lost in its intricacies, while perched in the cabin of a truck). He forgets the papers he writes tirelessly for every advanced journal on the cinema, mostly free. The cinema may be his profession, but his

high, broad forehead sees beyond its technical limitations into a meaning that may exploit or advance life, the living, the helpless. Directing a scene, turning a crank, cutting a film, he considers but the cog in a huge wheel that is beginning to turn with tremendous speed.

Eisenstein may return to the Soviet Union next month (March) with his comrades, Alexandrov and Tisse, to film a document in celebration of the fifteenth Anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Que Viva Mexico! may or may not stir an eddy of interest. Because of the flooded book marts that sag with volumes on tourist Mexico, there is a tremendous curiosity about the country. Even now everyone there is planning for the influx of Americans tired of the transatlantic crossing. Because of a universal undercurrent of unrest, the message of the film may stir a reaction. Because of its pictorial beauty it will be something to look at. Because of its mature outlook it will merit serious consideration. Who knows what it may do for Mexico?

BELA BELAZS

Translated for "Experimental Cinema" from the Soviet Newspaper, "Kino", by Alexander Brailovsky

LET'S ORGANIZE AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDIO FOR SOUND FILMS!

To produce a sound film it is necessary to study in a systematic manner all the new forms and possibilities of the dynamic effect of the sound film on the audience, and to put to practical use all such possibilities as basic material for the production of a concrete dramatic picture.

Every experimental film of this kind (100-150 meters) should have for its purpose to employ fully all variations and possibilities of a given effect and to apply all laws of correlation between the sound and the image in connection with the story written specifically with this purpose in view.

Such a short-reel film should bear "play-film" title, and only in a sub-title should its *technical purpose be indicated* (e.g., the testing of some definite sound variations).

In the first short-reel series of experimental "play-films"* we should develop the peculiar fields of specific sound-cinema effects.

1. The increase and decrease of tone-volume.
2. The correlation between the volume of the sound and the sharpness of the image. The parallel increase and decrease of the sound and the image (the increase of intensity)—or the comic effect of the opposite ac-

tion—a suddenly interrupted sound in connection with the increased action on the screen.

3. Parallel or syncopated movement in the rhythm of the picture and the rhythm of the sound. The musical rhythm as a preliminary allusion to the incipient intrinsic movement. The dramatic accent of a rest (pause) and silence.

4. Correlation between the character of an image and the tonality—Is it possible to perceive the subject of a picture by its musical accompaniment?—The employing, as the picture goes on, of all possible sound variations.—"What do you hear now?" (The identification of the sound with its source). (The world of near-sighted and blind people.)

5. The unity of a sound picture. Association of definite events with definite noises or music. Symbolism of the sound.

6. Association of images with music. The awakening of the perception of an image through music. The cinematographic accompaniment to a given music work.

7. The correlation between music and minds in nature.

8. The sound montage as musical shaping of noises.

9. Sound synchronization of silent pictures.

10. The simultaneous perception by the audience of the image on the screen and of sounds and the text, as though it is spoken from behind the stage.

11. Fantastic and grotesque sound. The distortion of real sound in memory and in imagination.

* Translator's note: By "play-film," in contradistinction to "documentary film," in Soviet Cinematography, is understood a film made from an especially prepared scenario, according to the story written for it, and played by actors, instead of being shot from real life-events (as Vertov's group is doing).

HOLLYWOOD: SALES AGENT OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

EDITORS' NOTE: *In presenting this article by our Cuban correspondent, we feel that we are privileged to afford the readers of **Experimental Cinema** with a document whose importance to the study of film-culture cannot be overestimated. Here is genuine analysis applied both to the cinema in its role as an agent of American imperialism and to the political tragedy of the peoples of Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and other American "colonies."*

"We have given Cuba industry, but are the Cubans free?"

Leland H. Jenks,
OUR CUBAN COLONY

"In Monroe's time the only way to take a part of South America was to take the land. Now finance has new ways of its own."

Walter Hinez Page

Of those "new ways" which American finance capital has now, Hollywood and its pictures are of great help by their power to form in the American people a wrong idea of the countries down by the Rio Grande as well as a perfect misconception of life among the peoples of Hispano-America.

The best exponent of those "new ways" is the so-called Republic of Cuba and I think that a brief historical digression, an exposition of the factors, the components of the Cuban social aggregate,—politico-economic source,—is necessary to clarify the present state of things and to emphasize the supremacy of Hollywood's pernicious influence on the social development of Cuba with particular reference to the peasants and proletarians.

In accordance with John Quincy Adams, the American statesmen have believed that Cuba "gravitates to the United States as an apple severed by the tempest gravitates to the ground." So, for 75 years they have looked for the chance of acquiring the island in one way or another.

The Cubans fought their way to liberty from 1850 to 1898. The first serious attempt was made from 1868 to 1878 in the Ten Years' War (*Guerra de los Diez Años*). A strong class (Cuban bourgeoisie) formed by rural and sugar-mill owners (*hacendados*), rich lawyers, tobacco planters, farmers, realized at that time—the middle of the Nineteenth century—the necessity of setting free the productive forces developed in the womb of the colonial-political structure by breaking through this structure. In the dialectic process that class was the negation struggling against the positive, the affirmative, impersonated in the colony taxes, laws, slavery, preponderance of the Church, etc., etc.

Owing to various factors, the attempt failed, thus according with Hegel's postulate: "When the power to develop the contradiction and bring it to a head is lacking, the thing or the being is shattered in the con-

tradiction." (Hegel, *Science of Logic*). So, the Cuban bourgeoisie failed to realize its historical role.

However, rebel "colonos" that were not entirely defeated, managed to get from Spain, in the famous pact known as the "Zanjón Pact," the promise of putting into effect some reforms and concessions.

Then began a long period of intermittent "pour-parlers" between Spain and the U. S. A. One day the U. S. A. wanted to buy the island, and the next day they did not. One President seemed to be a good friend of Cuba, the next one raised a high tariff against Cuban products, most of which go to that neutral market. So the U. S. A. made the Cuban bourgeoisie and the people of Cuba understand that their lives were in the hands of the U. S. A.

They realized this at last, but in the wrong way. They thought that once they were free and not a colony of Spain, the North American Republic would change its policies. So they started a new war against Spain in 1895. In 1898 the *Maine* was blown up in "la Bahía de la Habana." The Americans,—and when I say "the Americans" I mean the political and financial captains,—found their chance! The American Congress passed a joint resolution claiming that "the people of Cuba are and of right ought to be independent" and that "the United States disclaims any disposition or intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction or control over said Island of Cuba..."

This time the Cuban bourgeoisie completely failed to accomplish its nationalistic role, in accordance with the laws of historical determinism.

Thus, the United States entered into its second imperialistic war, disguised—as in 1916 and 1918—under the famous words: "justice," "humanity," "the right of the little countries," etc.

Three months later Spain was defeated and America acquired new territories. Porto Rico, the Philippine Islands and... Cuba. In 1902, after three years of intervention, they obliged the Cubans to sign the Platt Amendment and a commercial treaty adjunct to it and placed the government of the Island in the hands of the first president of the Republic of Cuba.

What a marvelous scheme! The finest, the wittiest ever imagined by an imperialistic government! A colony disguised as a Republic! Instead of Spain, it was now the United States who ruled. During the

past 30 years, American Capital, safeguarded by the Platt Amendment and under the privileges of the Commercial Treaty, has acquired,—the Great War and the 1920 crash accelerated the process,—the railroads, all public utilities, the banking and financial institutions, big mining enterprises, 80 percent of the sugar crop, 75 percent of the fertile soil, and very important commercial and real estate business, the racehorse track, the great Casino, etc., etc. . . .

So we have become an economic-political dependent of the United States, but we have a President of the Republic, a Senate, a House of Representatives which has diplomatic and consular representation all over the world . . . and a beautiful banner, a big red, white and blue triangle with a great white star in it, waving in the ocean breeze, shining in the sun, under a high tropical sky . . . These are the phrases which both the American and the Cuban politicians and financial magnates have used to the proletarians, peasants, artisans and petit bourgeoisie of Cuba.

The moving picture business could not be an exception in Cuba's economy, as it is in the hands of Hollywood producing companies who have representatives here. Some of them have their own theatres for the projection of their films. It can be said that a moving picture trust has been formed in Cuba by the American picture companies, which fixes the prices of the tickets, the size of advertisements in the newspapers, and which, in one way or another, boycotts the European and Soviet films.

So Cuba's population cannot see pictures other than the American and is therefore under the exclusive influence of Hollywood. Hollywood plays a great and two-edged part in the imperialistic scheme. By means of its pictures, Hollywood infects all other countries with the philistine, hypocritical, rotten American life-conception. At the same time, to the American masses, Hollywood presents the Latin American people as the lowest, most repulsive scoundrels on earth. A Latin, or Latin American, is always a traitor, a villain. Years ago, there was not a picture that was without a Spanish or Spanish-American villain. In *Strangers May Kiss*, they present a little Mexican town: the owner of the old "posada" (inn) is a drunkard and the "mozo" (servant, waiter) is a similar character; the streets with three feet of mud; countless beggars; licentious girls.

I remember, too, the picture, *Under the Texas Moon*, openly offensive to Mexican women, the projection of which in a movie-house in the Latin section of New York City provoked a terrible tumult. The tumult was caused by the enraged protest of a few Mexican and Cuban students, in which one of the former by the name of Gonzales was killed, and the Cubans, Gabriel Barcelo and Carlos Martinez, were sent to the Tombs.

In many cases these depictions are due to the encyclopedic ignorance of most of the film-directors of Hollywood. Such is the case with *The Cuban Love Song*, a stupid and absurd picture that will soon be finished in Hollywood, according to what Mr. Ernesto Lecuona has told a friend of mine. (Mr. Lecuona is a famous Cuban musician who went to Hollywood under contract to M-G-M to play in that picture.)

Such pictures are vulgar and grotesque, dull but full of the so-called "color" which so greatly pleases the "100 percent American,"—what a stupid, untrue designation, this expression, 100 percent American! For that type of man (hundred-percenter), all Spanish-American countries,—as well as Spain, I think,—are full of venal, lazy men and women of low mentality.

The best depiction I have read of that type of "American" is in John Reed's book *Daughter of the Revolution and Other Stories*. It is entitled *Mac-American*.

Hollywood, a docile and well-learned "servidor" of the American imperialists, reinforces those ideas by means of which the marines and soldiers will fight blindly against men they have never seen before and against whom they do not have any hatred, just as they had none in the Great War.

I do not know if there is an English translation of Hernan Robleto's book *Sangre en el Tropico*, (*Blood in the Tropics*), a vivid narration, highly lyrical, a mad cry from the Nicaraguan people, but it it has not already been translated, it should be immediately, in if it has not already been translated, it should be translated immediately in order to make the American people understand for what purpose and in what manner the Nicaraguans really died at the bottom of the deep, green, beautiful valleys and on the craggy rocks of "la sierra."

The Cuban social aggregate cannot be considered as other than that of a colony. There is the proletariat class, which is not great, notwithstanding the intense rationalization of the sugar industry, mining and tobacco manufacture. This proletariat is far from having reached maturity and, with the exception of the few members of the clandestine Communist Party, the class-consciousness of the workers is weak, most of them ignoring the very reason, the material source, of their misery and terrible exploitation. As a consequence of this weakness on the part of the proletariat and because of the intensive white terror, the class-struggle is obscurely defined.

Two transition (or intermediary) classes, the *guajiros* (peasants) and the *artisans* form the very nerve of the Cuban population. The former are very numerous, working mostly in the American latifundio, planting, cultivating, cutting and hauling the sugar, in the tobacco factories and in the cultivation of the minor fruits. Few of these peasants are what we call "colonos,"—a kind of independent planter,—but, in any case, they are the slaves of the foreign *entrepreneurs*, working themselves to death, their families steeped in misery and poverty, for the benefit of the shareholders and boards of directors in New York and London.

The degree of illiteracy in those two classes as well as in the proletariat is very high. In that class and in the two sub-classes are great numbers of Negroes, to whom I shall make special reference later.

Numerous, too, is the middle class or petit-bourgeoisie,—bank clerks, sugar, mining, tobacco, public utilities, real estate, railroad employees, as well as the State, the provincial government and the municipality officers. At the top is an ambitious bourgeoisie, now ruined as a result of the drop in the price of sugar, but

in very friendly disposition toward and in close relationship with the American *entrepreneurs*, from whom they expect to receive high emoluments, advantages, privileges and business participations. To them, Americans are always prospective buyers of their over-valued properties.

The whole population of Cuba suffers drastically from the influence of Hollywood pictures, and even though I am chiefly interested,—as may be easily understood,—in the effect of these pictures on the proletariat and the two classes aforementioned, I think their influence on the petit-bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie, deserves some consideration, although the former, and more especially the latter, are well satisfied with Hollywood films and do not accept other pictures for the simple reason that those made by Hollywood glorify the world in which they, snobs that they are, wish to live. Morally, economically, politically, they have been *deformed* by Hollywood and they do not tolerate even a German or a French picture.

The Cuban bourgeoisie know nothing about the new art movement all over the world. Romantic in their sentiments, they are likewise romantic in their artistic concepts and, as a consequence, they are highly conservative, suspecting in every artistic innovation a masked attack against the status quo in which, as exploiters, they are so comfortably entrenched.

To the girls and boys of the Cuban bourgeoisie, there is nothing so worthy of imitation as the boys and girls they see in the American films, and they want to shape their lives in conformity to the lives of motion picture heroes and heroines. From all this there arises the contradiction between a society that was almost patriarchal sixteen years ago and the new customs which the younger set, and even the adults, are trying to impose in matters of love, family relationships, etc. Then follow wild parties, "necking" orgies, licentiousness, miscomprehension of what "free love" really means, gross sensuality, lack of control of the lowest passions, and a narrow, American, utilitarian life-conception, an ardent paean to those who *win*, no matter how.

It is the beginning of that disintegrating process through which the bourgeoisie all over the world is passing in its final stages as a perishing class.

An art is what the dominant class wants it to be, because an art involves "men." An art consists of the artists by whom it is accomplished or performed, and artists are what the productive relations make them under the pressure of those who possess the money and the power.

So, cinema art, like every other art in society, is a class matter based on the class struggle. The film is, therefore, a weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie in its struggle against the proletariat for the conservation of the present relations of production and appropriation. And what a weapon the bourgeoisie and American imperialism have in the cinema! Even the weapon of religion in the hands of the Roman Catholic Church, embodied in the classical arts—painting, sculpture, architecture, and printing,—was not so effective, so efficient, as this new weapon, the vital art of our time.

Hollywood pictures are furiously individualistic. They exalt what the North Americans call "self-made

men," the men who have always accomplished great success by themselves, as if in society (especially in a society so highly interrelated as modern capitalist society) things were like that.

For the American movies there is no such thing as the social problem. It is *taboo*, and even when the Hollywood producers make a picture with some social foundation, they distort it and pervert it, as in the case of *An American Tragedy*. Charles Chaplin himself, who, without question, has a social preoccupation, expresses it timidly, not being sufficiently courageous or able to face that problem squarely and develop it to its logical conclusion. Thus, in his films, the "little vagabond" has more "atmosphere" (social overtones) than the protagonist of the standard American picture,—for the latter there is no such thing as the environment or the social *milieu* and man acts as an independent subject,—but there is not a real attempt to present and analyze the inner source, the *social source*, of his condition and status as a lumpenproletariat.

In this connection, I refer the reader to Waldo Frank's book *The Re-Discovery of America*, Chap XI, pp. 138 and 139. For different reasons,—without question,—both Charles Chaplin and the average American director do the same thing: evade the social problem.

What does Hollywood show to Cuban peasants and proletarians?

In the American film there is always a perfect understanding between Capital and Labor, between patron and worker, between master and wage-slave, the former (Capital) as well as the State (emanated from God) being like a tender, comprehending father. No mistake in this: if you are obedient and laborious, they (the bosses) will recognize it some day and "raise" you with a gracious gesture. If there is some cruelty or injustice in this "best of all possible worlds,"—oh, *Candide!*—then, at the end of the picture, with God's will, everything is fixed and the good will get their recompense.

And the Cuban worker, who lives in very different conditions, with a low salary and high living costs, without liberty or the right to express his own class-convictions, let alone the natural human right to exist, poisoned with the slogans and lies of the American films, just as his brothers in the past were degraded by the Roman conformity and humility dogma, is supposed to hope that some day his country, under the capitalistic system, will be as "civilized" as the great North American Republic. And even more: the Cuban worker is supposed to feel gratitude to that Anglo-Saxon race, so "pure," "strong" and "clean," helping this ill-disciplined and sometimes revolutionary little nation to acquire honest political institutions, good finances, etc., etc. . . . (*Tell it to the Nicaraguans, to the Porto Rican slaves, to the people of Haiti, whom your marines persecuted and outraged—no matter what the American justification in pictures against Sandino and others.*)

We do not have, as in Mexico, Peru and Chile, the problem of the tremendous masses of Indians, and the racial problem does not exist in Cuba, at least not like in the United States. The first act of the Cuban

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CINE-ANALYSIS

As a basis for my work on a "cine-piece," I apply the analytical method which, as a result of the analysis of my experience, has gradually crystallized into an ever clearer and more distinctly outlined method of film-treatment.

The orientation towards the "cine-language," as the richest, the most rational and the most comprehensible means of expression—is unconditionally correct. My conviction in this has been strengthened and confirmed by my latest work on the film, *Spring*.

This film, expressed entirely in the pure cine-idiom, without resorting to the aid of literary explanations (titles)—proved to be one easily understood by the masses.

What does "cine-language" mean?

What does "cine-A B. C" mean?

Leaving aside the existing literary alphabet, —what must be considered as a single "cine-letter," "cine-word," "cine-sentence," "cine-piece"?

To answer this it is necessary first of all to investigate whether it is possible to draw a parallel between the language of literature and the language of the cinema.

A letter, a word, a sentence, as the elements of literary expression, are conventionally accepted conceptions and, therefore, they are comprehensible to a literate person only, while every frame of a film speaks in the most concrete way, giving the reproduction of the life-phenomena among which an individual is being brought up. Thus the elements of cine-expression are understood even by an illiterate.

A cine-element gives at once both the definition and the object; it speaks at one and the same time about the form, the quality, the dynamic and the whole series of other categories, which in literature would require an extensive narrative.

It is possible to draw partially a parallel between "cine-language" and the "language of music (provided it is possible to speak at all of the 'language' of music) as far as, for instance, rhythm and tempo are concerned.

The closest analogy to the work on the creation of a "cine-piece" is afforded by the work of an engineer or a chemist.

The only difference is that an engineer or a chemist knows beforehand the material which he will use in his constructions. An engineer can estimate exactly the necessary building material and can foresee its qualities and functions. A chemist can in advance take into account the elements necessary for the composition of this or that body.

But in obtaining the material for a "cine-piece," the elements which will be used as its building material can be pre-estimated only in a very limited way. In other words, the presence of concrete elements can not be guaranteed. Instead, there is a very extensive choice of elements of cine-expressions, which can be used functionally for a single given case.

The last condition neutralizes the impossibility to pre-estimate the concrete material and to provide oneself with it in a definite way. The obtaining of material out of which a cine-piece will be constructed, and the very work of construction—this, I consider as primary analysis, secondary analysis,—plus synthesis. In other words, I consider the analytical investigation as the fundamental, basic work.

I use my own eyes for preliminary orientation ("pre-shooting"); then I introduce a camera, as an apparatus of more perfect vision, possessing the faculty of fixation.

The second stage of the primary analysis is "the shooting," i.e., the attack with the camera upon the settings, selected by "pre-shooting," for the purpose of their further analysis and fixation. Thus, the preliminary analysis has two stages of work; pre-shooting and shooting.

Pre-shooting serves first, for the selection from the entire sum of phenomena of those necessary for the given case; secondly, for the decomposition of phenomena into basic ones, derivative ones, etc.

Phenomena, analyzed in such a way, provide already the material for the last stage of the work of shooting,—the fixation. The path of fixation is determined firstly, by the purpose for which the analysis has been made and the results of the analysis—the characteristics of the phenomena subject to fixation, the milieu, in which they take their place and their individual features.

By "milieu" I mean: conditions of illumination, the general background, the separate phenomena which form the background, the influence and the action of the surrounding phenomena upon the phenomenon-subject to be fixed.

The individual qualities of the phenomena are: the structure, color, character of surface, size, the "usualness" or "rareness" of phenomena, if its nature is animate or inanimate, dynamic or static, its adaptability or unadaptability to the action of the camera. The first stage of primary analysis, the "pre-shooting," determines the group to which the phenomenon belongs. The moment one introduces the camera into a definite milieu—one has to be fully prepared in order to fix the maximum quantity of moments necessary for the snapping of the given subject,—even those moments which have been somehow overlooked in the pre-shooting.

By shooting we carry the dissection of the phenomena further into its composite elements and we fix them—in one way or another, according to the thematic orientation or the organization of material decided upon previously.

In order to show in a clearer manner how theoretical principles are applied in practice, I am going to give a few instances from my film, *Spring*.

Commemoration for the dead at the cemetery.

(Ceremonial dinner traditionally given in old Russia by the relatives of the dead right after the funeral.—*Trans. Note.*)

The pre-shooting gives:

1. The priests prowling about the cemetery.
2. One of them is hired for the funeral services.
3. The funeral service.
4. Paying the priest.
5. Passing the bottle (booze).
5. Having a bite to eat after.
7. Drunken carouse.
8. The brawl.

Now the pre-shooting is over. Let us take up the fixation and consider a few moments of it:

"Priests prowling about the cemetery."

Analyzing this I find that:

1. The shooting is necessarily done from a position of hiding—as the phenomenon is suitable for camera treatment.

2. The "prowling priest" must be perceived by the audience as a fast-moving, dynamic phenomenon.

3. The taking should be done against the most striking background, or against the background which would aid most in the "theme-feeling."

The first problem is solved by the long shot from the hiding-place. The second—by the pan-shot with the fixation of the passing-by priest always at the center of the frame.

This way of using the long-focussed optic gives the best illusion of the shooting of the movement, i.e., gives the best angle of observation of the phenomenon in motion. The same method solves in this particular case the third problem—to outline sharply the observed phenomenon upon the ever narrowing background, and it even creates the stereoscopic illusion.

"The funeral service."

A considerably extensive observation of the phenomenon has led me to the conclusion that it has a finished scheme—from the beginning to the end.

This scheme is not perceived by us because its separate moments are scattered in time farther from each other than could be grasped by our visual memory. For the very same reason we do not see the movement of the hand of the clock on the dial, nor the slow processes of destruction, e.g., the gradual disruption of rocks by the action of the winds, landslides, etc. The slowed-down shooting reduces distance between separate moments of the slow-moving process and thus discloses its dynamic scheme and even deciphers its laws.

In modern city and street-planning, the laws governing the movement of liquids are being taken into account. In narrow passages, at the maximum aggregation of pedestrians and vehicles—current decreases; at the outlets—the current increases.

At one of the October celebrations I had the occasion to take, by a slowed-down camera, the passing of the procession. The accelerated movement obtained gave the scheme of the movement of a human stream.

In the film, *Spring*, I caught the long, slow-moving funeral service by slowed-down shooting, and thus could obtain the scheme of a small selection of the puppet-show,—which presents the religious rites in general.

In this case the camera helped to investigate a life-

phenomenon by means of mechanically assisted vision, as a microscope discloses to us phenomena unseen by the unaided eye.

In this synoptical exposition I have pointed out only the most outstanding methods, which give an idea of the analytical approach to the use of camera-possibilities: rapid shooting, assisting our eye for the analysis of fast-moving phenomena; shooting from points inaccessible or accessible with difficulty to the unaided eye; the dissection of the general appearance of the phenomenon and the fixation by close-ups of its constructive elements; further dissection of the phenomena and the fixation by the macro-shooting, micro-shooting, tele-shooting, etc.

Such are the analytical possibilities which are offered by the cine-camera.

As a result, we have on our montage shelves the material for the future film,—still not entirely dissected into its elements, still with predomination of the complexed phenomena, subject to further analysis. One should not forget that "an element" is not a constructive quantity or conception.

Our estimation of a given portion of the material, as an element of a film, depends upon our thematic purpose and the form of cine-expression which we pre-establish.

Thus, we come to the secondary analysis, i.e., the analysis of the material obtained. Properly speaking, the process of analysis goes on uninterruptedly. I make a distinction between the primary and the secondary analysis only, according to the character of working processes. It would, therefore, be erroneous to think that the work of discovery of cine-language is limited by the primary analysis only.

In fact, by the primary analysis we obtained only raw material—half-manufactured stuff,—but there is contained in this raw material the maximum of elements needed by us.

Now, what does the element of the secondary analysis mean?

What was considered an element in the primary analysis is only raw material in the secondary one.

Thus the study of life-phenomena becomes a planned, ever-deepening research. Now, what is the depth, what are the limits of the secondary analysis?

Everything is clear and comprehensible in the primary analysis, both in pre-shooting and in the shooting: out of the total sum of phenomena we select those which are thematically necessary; we study their details; we dissect them into the elements they are made of, as far as possibilities of tele-, macro-, and micro-shooting permit.

What further analysis could be possible, then?

It seems as though it is possible to speak only of the classifying of elements of the primary analysis, and of their thematic "concatenation," according to Pudovkin's formula, or of their "conflict," according to Eisenstein.

Let us consider the classified material.

We take from the montage box a Section A. All frames of this piece are alike as to composition and content. Now let's take another piece, B; while studying the frames of this section, we see that every frame is different from its neighbor's, because the primary analysis in this case has fixed a dynamic phenomenon

and the very dissimilarity of the separate frames determines the cinematic nature of Section B.

If we consider a single frame as an element, we shall have a series of similar elements in A, while B consists of series of dissimilar elements.

In the synthesis, i.e., in the construction of a cine-sentence, if we use A, we may take the necessary number of frames from each end. But in order to use B, we need first to analyze it, because it consists of series of elements of a movement, of intermediary points and the points of culmination. There is no cine-language without taking into account such elements.

A few instances from the film, *Spring*. As a result of the primary analysis, I obtained a series of sections representing the football game.

After having classified the material, i.e., sorted into groups the functionally similar pieces, we obtain:

Group 1. Goal-keeper's work.

Group 2. The foot strikes the ball.

Group 3. Reaction on the faces.

Let us take and analyze a piece of group 1. This piece contains a static moment: a goal-keeper on watch.

A defensive move

The receiving of the ball

Thus the piece of group 1, while being an element in the primary analysis, gives a series of new elements in the secondary analysis.

We do similar work on a piece of group 2. We obtain:

A man runs toward the ball

Strikes the ball

The inertia of the player

Let us suppose that for our purpose, a study of football needs no further analysis of these two groups.

Now we take up group 3—the men's faces reacting to the game.

In every piece of this group we find a series of elements which are functionally different. Some of them correspond to the reaction to the hitting of the goal by the ball, some react to the foul hit, some express anxiety, some tensivity of waiting, etc.

When we consider the elements obtained, we shall have still shorter slices, i.e., pieces consisting of a very small number of frames, but, in recompense, more saturated.

In the montage of the film, *Spring*, I carried the analysis of these slices still further, and obtained a culmination point—a frame yielding the *maximum* for the characterization of a given reaction. By multiplication of the frame, I obtain statics—in a maximum of dynamics.

In the other part of the same film I show the Easter holidays as a feast of gluttony and boozing.

One of the elements obtained by the primary analysis:

A woman drinking vodka

The secondary analysis gives a new series of elements:

The woman brings the glass into her mouth

She drinks

With a jerk she brings the glass away from her mouth

The distorted features expressing reaction to the bitter taste of vodka

Thus we dissected a piece into a series of separate moments and every moment is taken into account as an element of the future film-structure.

But we are not at the end yet.

Let us carry on the study of elements obtained. We see a series of frames—and almost every one could serve as an independent montage-element.

In our case I used the culmination points of the elements obtained by the secondary analysis—by the multiplication of a frame.

Due to that, we have disclosed the instinctive resistance of the organism to the poison.

This method is, in fact, a way of scientific analysis. In the primary analysis it is analogous to slowed-down shooting, rapid shooting, macro- and micro-shooting.

I have applied this method for the first time in the film, *Moscow*, to the theme: "Moscow taking a rest." At the climax of merrymaking I use the culmination-frame as an element; by the multiplication of a single frame as an element; by the multiplication of a single point.

The film, *Spring*, contains many moments built upon such a multiplication of a frame. At the end of part 5, I give the extract of *laughter*,—through culmination-frames I obtain the montage of a cine-laugh, "cine-guffaw."

One would think that having come to a single frame, we have reached the most simple element of cine-language. But analyzing the frame itself, studying its constituent elements, we often find elements necessary for the building of a given cine-sentence. How are such elements obtained? Mostly by the extensive use in photography of the enlarging from the negative of part of a shot.

By the same means, in the secondary analysis we can decompose a single frame into constituent elements.

Thus—after having investigated the material by the primary analysis, after having decomposed it into elements by the secondary analysis,—we can take up the synthesis:

the construction of a cine-piece.

"THE NEW REPUBLIC" ON "THE ROAD TO LIFE"

"... in spite of these faults, and half a dozen others, I would rather see this picture than the slickest society drama that ever came out of Hollywood. The Russian films take you somewhere; they rouse your anger or enthusiasm; they get something done."

—Malcolm Cowley in *The New Republic*
of February 10, 1932.

A FEW REMARKS ON THE ELEMENTS OF CINE-LANGUAGE

Experimental Cinema has asked me to clarify certain ideas and terminology propounded in M. Kaufman's article. While agreeing to do this, I wish to emphasize that I take full responsibility for the interpretation of M. Kaufman's ideas and if my interpretation is wrong—the fault is entirely mine.—A.B.

I.

Suppose you read the word "horse." As a means of literary expression it is only an abstract and very general symbol. It is left to your imagination to decide upon a whole series of qualifications of a "horse." It might be a big horse, small, harness, race, young, old, with a fluffy tail, or tail-less, Arab stallion or French percheron, or a Russian, half-starved peasant "seevka." Now, when you see the horse on the screen, all these qualifications are given to you at once and immediately in a *visual image*. Let's call this visual image a "cine-word." We see that to render adequately just a single "cine-word" by the means of written words—we should need a page of description.

On the other hand, suppose you read a word "war." It is perhaps impossible to render it by a single image: we need a series of images, the sum of which suggests to us the idea of a "war."

So "cine-language" has its own nature, different from literary language. Now to continue.

2.

What is a single "cine-letter"? Again we resort to the analogy with the written letter. I write a single letter "m." It hardly has any meaning by itself. Taken by itself, it is only a mere phonetic symbol. It acquires meaning only in definite connection with other letters. It might be a part of a word "mother," or "miner," or "mushroom," or "bum," or "Omaha," or "Potemkin," etc., etc.

Accordingly, an isolated elementary image has no cinematographic "meaning." Suppose I see an image of "a bottle." Only in connection with other images do I perceive whether it is a bottle of whiskey, confiscated by prohibition agents,—or a bottle thrown into the ocean by people from a drowning boat, containing important information,—or a bottle as a weapon in a drunken brawl of sailors in a Shanghai saloon, etc.

The same as a word "Potemkin" cannot be written without an "m,"—so a certain situation cannot be expressed through images without presenting the image of a "bottle."

Let us call such a single image a "cine-letter."

3.

Now, suppose you want to express cinematographically the following *literary sentence*: "Ivan's childhood passed in a family of a poor shoemaker, with a drunkard father, while his mother was a timid, God-fearing woman." The series of correspondent concrete *visual*

images—let us call them a *cine-sentence*. "Taking up the foregoing example: To a single literary word "War" on the screen would correspond to a whole "cine-sentence."

"words, words, words" . . .), their disposition in a sentence—they rhythmical flow—their recurrence or vice-versa—expressions of the same idea by different words,—in short, a manipulation of *words*, as material, is what we call a literary manner, or style, (chool, etc.). The analogical choice, disposition, rhythmical outline, manipulation of elementary single visual *images*, "cine-words" (or mechanically speaking, certain sets of frames or, as Kaufman suggests, even *parts* of a frame)—is the *montage*, (or mechanically speaking, "cutting").

4.

Of course, the above is only the first approximation. Styles, as the most synthetic characteristic of the art of certain epochs, have always been the expression of the psychology, and, in particular, of the ideology of definite social groups. This refers to the cinema and its montage-style. The relation of the style to the social class is a problem passionately discussed in present Soviet film-literature. In the Soviet Union it is not a problem of pure theory. The Soviet cinematographers are trying to discover the constituent elements of a proletarian style in the art of the film. The treatment of the problem in this sense is outside the purely technical article of Kaufman.

Kaufman's article discusses only visual "silent" films. The advent of sound, or spoken word, brings, of course, additional elements to the problem.

5.

Micro-, macro-, tele-shooting, etc., . . . Kaufman calls the camera "an apparatus of more perfect vision."

It is true, but with the following reservations: our vision is stereoscopic, camera gives us rather flat images, perceived at two slightly different angles—wherefrom the feeling of "depth." But camera has a single eye. A man, one-eyed from birth will be probably more satisfied with our present flat screen "images" than a people with normal vision. In this sense our natural vision is perhaps more perfect than a mechanical eye.

With this reservation, a camera eye, a lense, is more perfect apparatus of vision. Furthermore, different systems of lenses add to our natural eye artificial "eyes" of tremendous power: microscope, telescope. Artificial eyes see—and through them a sensitive plate could be fix—extremely small details and processes (life of microbes), as well as cosmically extremely distant objects. The adaptation of microscopic or telescopic lenses is an immensely enriching reinforcement of our visual imagery. They open a new world of "cine-letters" and "cine-words." They enable us to "shoot" what is going on on the summit of a mountain, to "shoot" from



In the country of the magueys



Ayuntamiento

de Madrid

Girl from the Isthmus



Two production-stills showing Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Tisse at work on "QUE VIVA MEXICO!" The upper still shows Eisenstein looking into the viewfinder to gauge an angle close-up of a Mexican woman. The lower still shows the S. M. Eisenstein Collective Production company at work. Eisenstein, in the mackinaw jacket, is directing. Next to him, with hand upraised, is Agustin Aragon Leiva, special Mexican assistant to Eisenstein, translating into Spanish instructions given by Eisenstein in French and English. Tisse is the "gypsy" at the camera. Alexandrov can be seen kneeling beside him. The man with the big hat is the Mexican charro, Melesio Abelar, who, when not holding reflectors, plays the "bad man" in the episode. Under the fire-works bull is Martin Hernandez. No artificial lighting was used in any of the scenes of "QUE VIVA MEXICO!"



Angle close-up from the sequence of the bull-fight in the episode called "Romance."

PHOTO BY
ALEXANDROV.



HOLLYWOOD FILMS AND THE WORKING CLASS

Millions of workers in the United States go to the picture theatres every week. The films shown at these theatres are turned out by half a dozen gigantic industries which are owned and controlled by the bourgeois class. This class sees to it that American films reflect only capitalist "ideals"—ideals of business, of imperialism, of morality, of racial and national superiority.

Although the workers and their families constitute almost nine-tenths of the audiences at the picture theatres, the American cinema does not concern itself with their life and problems. Economic exploitation, unemployment, the class war—all subjects of vital importance to the intelligent worker—are rigorously excluded from the American screen. In this country, films are made to lull the working class into a state of mental vacuity, to take their minds from the dreary realities of every-day life. For a worker whose thoughts are occupied with the screen amours of Greta Garbo, or with the fascinating dramatic intricacies of *Should Wives Tell?* or *Where's Your Husband?* or *Girls Demand Excitement*—such a worker is not likely to become a victim of radical propaganda, or a militant fighter for a new civilization.

What does the American worker see when he goes to a picture show? The sex revels of the "upper" class; anatomical details of leading ladies; palatial dwellings inhabited by parasites who never work; gigolos, pimps, prostitutes; animated fashion-plates, both male and female; gangster warfare, with the goodlooking gangster ultimately reforming by becoming a respectable business man and marrying his employer's daughter; the life and adventures of a young widow who is left a million dollars, and who is bored with everything until she meets the right man—and so on, to the point of driveling imbecility.

In connection with the feature picture, the worker also sees news-reels of the *Pride of the Navy*, the latest army equipment, commercialized sports, and the sweet face of some notorious political crook. He never sees a bread-line, or a strike. He never sees a whole family of starved working people thrown into the streets. He never sees the merciless exploitation of the masses of workers and farmers. He never sees the lynching of a Negro worker. He never sees a militant demonstration of his class and the sickening brutality of capitalism's cossacks—the police. If such films are ever made, they are never released.

The ruling class of ancient Rome, when their power was threatened by proletarian uprisings, appeased their slaves by providing them with free bread and circuses—*panem et circenses*. The American ruling class provide their wage-slaves with the mediocrity and filth that emanate from Hollywood. But there is this difference: our modern slaves pay for their own debasement.

The Russian film is a glorious contrast. Russia is the only country where films are made of the very sub-

stance of life. There is no romanticising, no glossing over the facts of daily existence. The cinema industry of the Soviet Union is owned and controlled by the workers themselves, as are all other enterprises of the country. The Soviet film is looked upon as a powerful medium for culture and progress. It deals with the vital problems of the toiling masses, with science, hygiene, collectivization, the housing problem, the Five-Year Plan, with the Revolution, the class-war. In the Soviet Union films are not used as a soporific to dull the workers' minds, but rather to stimulate them to renewed effort and achievement, for the purpose of raising their own standard of life. They are shown in factories, on farms, in schools and theatres, wherever workers or their children gather.

The cultural film of Soviet Russia is totally different from the purely commercial film of America. The Russian workers, who control the film output, are tremendously interested in creating and disseminating things worthwhile, because they know that they themselves will immediately benefit therefrom. Nothing is too good for them. In addition to satisfying their economic requirements, they want the best in art, literature, the drama and the cinema. Bolshevik Russia is the only country on earth that has an artistic censorship. And it is the literate worker himself who is his own censor. Moscow is the only city which has a film university, where students must study for several years every possible aspect of cinematographic production before they are permitted to engage in any important film activity, such as photography, writing or directing.

In America the artistic quality of a picture, its fidelity to life, is a mere secondary consideration, if, indeed, it is any consideration at all. The commercial nature of the American film is only too obvious from the moment the scenario is written and accepted to the moment the finished product is released for universal consumption. Artistic integrity means nothing to the average American director. It is merely a question of box-office. In fact, the overwhelming majority of American directors, whose pathetic duty it is to turn out Hollywood masterpieces, are altogether unaware of the almost limitless potentialities of their own medium. Many of them are essentially illiterate men, who have been elevated to their positions because of kinship or "pull" and not because they have shown any genuine aptitude for their profession. They have not the slightest conception of rhythm, montage, photographic and dramatic values, or of any of the basic ingredients of good film-technique. And behind the directors stand the supervisors and general managers—*ci-devant* pants-pressers and nickelodeon proprietors, who are profoundly moved by only one thing: the acquisition of sizeable fortunes. And then behind the supervisors and general managers, stands the sinister power of entrenched privilege—the bankers, the financiers, the successful racketeers

TOWARD A WORKERS' CINEMA IN ENGLAND

The Merseyside Workers' Film Society

Nearly two years ago a conference of socialist teachers decided to show, during the course of their meetings at Birkenhead, a film called *A Journey to Soviet Russia*. The film was banned on some pretext by the local authorities and it was never shown. But the teachers called their friends and neighbors and out of their protest grew the Merseyside Workers' Film Society.

Only those who have some knowledge of the hostility on the part of the English authorities to films, to Russia, and to workers, can realize what difficulties the Society struggles against and with what pride it now points to its achievements over the past two seasons. These include the gathering together of a membership of some 500 people, the holding of 15 performances at monthly intervals at a charge of ten shillings for a season's membership, and the showing of all the great Soviet films, whether banned or not, with the exception of *Ten Days That Shook the World*.

It is only quite recently that Soviet films have been finding their way into England and getting past the Censorship, and even yet *Potemkin* remains banned and has never been publicly shown. It was a great triumph for Merseyside when our first banned film—*New Babylon*—ran through the projector and when *Potemkin* itself was put on in a crowded hall. Russian films, German films, any films of intelligence have extreme difficulty in getting through to the public in England. If they negotiate the Censor successfully they have still to face the neglect of the renters. So that for the ordinary person there is positively no chance of seeing such masterpieces as *Earth*, *The General Line*, *Storm Over Asia*, except in the private societies. And private societies—especially when they included the word "workers" in their name—are faced with almost insurmountable difficulties.

In England, power over film-shows rests with the local authorities. The Censor has no official standing, though in practice his word is law. But local authorities may override his decisions and private societies can sometimes persuade their local magistrates to sanction a private performance. But here the chief of the

of our modern world, who dictate all ultimate policies.

The Soviet film is frankly "propaganda"—propaganda against ignorance and superstition, against capitalism and wage-slavery, propaganda for the better life, for Communism. The American film is also "propaganda"—propaganda for ignorance and superstition, for vulgarity and moral degradation—in short, propaganda for capitalism. Unlike our films, the Soviet cinema is made to educate the workers, to make them aware of their historic mission in creating the society of the future—the Soviet Union of the World. And this educative intent is more than a vague aspiration. For *Storm Over Asia*, *Old and New*, *Potemkin*, *The End of St. Petersburg*, *Soil*, *China Express*, and many other Soviet films are enduring monuments of the new proletarian culture.

local fire-brigade steps in. Unless the building in which the film is shown complies with very stringent fire-regulations, no film-shows are allowed. And since normally the only buildings which do so comply are commercial movie-houses, our Society must hire one. But the only day on which a cinema is free for private use is a Sunday, and here the law steps in with a Seventeenth Century act and forbids Sunday performances! Apart from fire-regulations, authorities have little control over films, but these regulations are sufficient to enable a political censorship to be exercised.

Merseyside has been lucky. Liverpool possesses two halls which satisfy the fire-brigade, but are not licensed cinemas. Here is a loop-hole, and here the films have been shown, badly and uncomfortably it is true, with a single projector with its waits between reels, with a screen which gets itself into pleats, with hard seats on a level floor—but what odds a few drawbacks?

The adventures of the early days are worth recalling. After two shows an avalanche descended—the films had been *Two Days* and *Turk-Sib*. The hall—a theatre run by the University Settlement—refused permission for further performances; the press conducted a campaign against what they called the subversive character of the society, and the secretary was forced to resign by his employers. Then came a show in a cinema closed for a few days while talkies were installed, and then an application to the magistrates for Sunday performances—refused, of course. Permission to use a hall belonging to the city was sought and refused, but at last fortune, in the shape of the local Co-operative Society, smiled and produced the uncomfortable but fire proof hall in which present shows are given. But even they are limited in number by certain obscure local by-laws.

So, to be an intelligent worker cinema-goer in England is not easy. A bourgeois film-society in London with expensive rates and a high-sounding committee gets privileges the workers' societies are denied. But, nevertheless, the work goes on.

The future holds prospects of further difficulties. Talkies impose a financial strain almost unbearable, while the standard of production is definitely too low, and Russia, the home of worker-art, has still to send us the results of her latest experiments. But the art of the silent screen is not yet exhausted, while England teems with cinema material waiting to be fixed in celluloid by a future worker-director of a worker-production unit. A start has already been made by the Federation, and shortly Merseyside's docks and dockers with their manifold problems will be screened by the Merseyside Society. And strikes and bread lines and unemployed marches will be woven into great works of revolutionary movement. But what will the Censor say? Perhaps by then he will have followed the gold standard into oblivion!

TECHNICAL BRILLIANCE OR IDEOLOGY?

With as yet no evidence of Soviet achievement in the sound cinema, * those in America who have been looking for the talkie to vindicate itself have watched with interest the efforts of other European studios to solve the problems of the microphone and sound track before the genius of the Soviet directors determines the new esthetic of the film. However, not much of value has been forthcoming, for the Germans have lost themselves in the slough of musical comedy, while the French cannot free themselves from slavish imitation of American commercial methods. *Das Maedel von der Reeperbahn*, hailed as a masterpiece of the continent, failed to find a synthesis of the traditional intimate film and the new operetta style despite its remarkable contrast of two types of woman.

Among the most recent of European importations are Rene Clair's *Le Million* and G. W. Pabst's *Die Drei Groschenoper*. In both films one can see the director feeling his way from situation to situation with no sure hand, drawing from his fund of resources with almost no sense of unity of style or dynamic structure. Yet both are brilliant for what they are intended to be, even though that accomplishment is a violation of the true dialectics of the film.

Clair's film does not pretend to be anything more than an entertainment along the lines of the director's peculiar talent—a penchant for satiric wit. It follows the conventional "chase" pattern immortalized by Mack Sennett's cop comedies and, indeed, shows no great advance over them in the realization of cinematic values. Its constant straining after effect grows increasingly irritating as one becomes aware that the things Clair is ridiculing are so very easily disposed of, if not taken for granted and pushed off to one side to make room for greater problems. Then, too, it is all only good-natured spoofing, never far from pathos that is inherent in the loving care with which each type is characterized. Purely bourgeois in its appeal, *Le Million* often approaches infantile humor when it is supposed to be witty. Technically, it is a concession to popular taste, deserting many of the mounting achievements of the same director's *Sous les Toits de Paris*. In seeking to shift emphasis the director often loses himself in the contemplation of documentary material. The dialogue and action sequences are not well spaced, and the alternate use of descriptive sound with lip-moving pantomime (influence of Mickey Mouse Cartoons here) and scenes full of recorded phrases, breaks up the tonal rhythm, for the effect is invariably that certain stretches of sound track have been "dubbed." The scenario-construction is very poor.

If Clair's film can be excused as just a fantastic comedy with music, *Die Drei Groschenoper* cannot be passed off so lightly, for it presents itself potentially as "a film for the revolutionary." There have even been rumors that it was accepted in Berlin as a piece of Communist propaganda masking as a modernization

of John Gay's *The Beggars' Opera*. Certain it is that it has not caused any great excitement so far in New York and that is not entirely due to the astuteness of the American people. The film does not render homage to the powers that be, but neither does it sympathize with the exploited underdog. It is entirely lacking in humanity and is painfully mocking in its overtones. Even its humor is vicious in its implications and the impersonal detachment with which the grim march of the beggars is presented indicates a fatalistic acceptance of diseased social conditions. Here is no insistent dialectics of an Eisenstein, no lyrical perspective of a Pudovkin, no poetic vision of a Dovzhenko, but the masochistic clairvoyance of a man who feels the death-rattle in the throat of capitalistic society. The revengeful king of the beggars incites the blind plodding masses to a rebellious march that disperses the dummy superiority of royalty, but as the sullen protestants disappear down the empty streets their revolt becomes a mere gesture. For now the true rulers are revealed, secure in their power, as the racketeer and the chief of police. Together with the beggar king, whose feint has been successful, they plan the future exploitation of the frustrated masses. There is no way out, this thing must go on forever as long as he lives. Such is the ideology of *Die Drei Groschenoper*.

How this can be misconstrued as Communist propaganda is hard to see. True, Pabst is merciless in drawing the rapacious character of his racketeers and unhesitant in depicting the bloody corruption of the police, but instead of using the true working-class as his foils, he holds up the grotesque mirror of its slum proletariat—the economic misfit who in turn lives on the parasitic capitalist. There is something diabolically cruel about the baroque spirit which pervades the film, and yet it is successful in capturing the baffling aspect that contemporary life must have for a bourgeois intellectual disgusted with the world.

Unfortunately, the film's unity suffers from the taint of operetta interpolations and often Pabst is compelled to forsake his devotion to the filmic representation of mind and motivation in order to convey the sentiment of actional incident.

Just how much the society within which the creators of these two films worked is responsible for their lack of social conscience is hard to say. But satire should at least contain some dialectic analysis of existing conditions and it is doubtful if the unscrupulousness of Pabst is not invidious in its suggestion and false emphasis. What is lacking is the purposeful intent of the Soviet film which does not need to protect itself, but only to improve society.

*Editor Note: As this goes to press, word comes from the Soviet Union of the immense success of the two new sound films: *The Road to Life* and the Kozintsov-Trauberg production, *Alone*. These two films are said to have started the long-awaited revolution in the use of sound.

OZEP'S FILM, "THE MURDERER KARAMAZOV"

That this picture, which by way of filmic concept offered exceptional values, had no effect on the broad masses, is in all probability due to the fact that in the filmic-dramatic treatment a compromise was made: its theme was vested with unfinished, half-solved psychological problems.

On the one hand, the expansive Dostoevskian ideology was compressed into a general formula of appeal, and on the other hand, as a result of this procedure, all deeper contact with the psychological development of the theme was lost. For this reason the bare, crystallized action of the film, a murder affair, touched on the original idea only in its high spots and made various longer or shorter cross-cuts through the straight line of concept, as well as through the physical action, of the novel itself.

Of course, this rationalization of the material for purposes of filmic adaptation was unavoidable—a hypothetical necessity. This immediately raises the question of how far it is possible to present filmically, that is, to do filmic justice to a literary work of such scope as *The Brothers Karamazov*. Regardless of the philosophical power of its dialectical comment, this dimensional structure of Dostoevsky's novel demands its definite mode of action—for the many episodes, cross-cuts of narrative and various interruptive tales are the trunks and branches of the tree, and these result in that vast expansion which, in the final analysis, is experienced as a pleasant release, even though it may not be felt as a necessity compellingly bound to the structure.

That Fedor Ozep, the creator of this film, was fully aware of the enormous difficulties confronting him in the filmic presentation of this powerful material is clearly evident in the fact that his film does not bear the title of the novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, but instead is called *The Murderer Karamazov*. Furthermore, in the credit-title the picture is announced as a "Treatment of the Novel of Dostoevsky"; and, finally, Ozep borrowed only such themes from the original as contained purely motoric and dynamic elements. This forced a change of values and established a new ideology—in short, a film which had little, if anything, in common with its literary antecedent, or better, which dared not have such a relationship.

Thus, the frequently undertaken experiment to present literary works in their completeness on the screen, must again be accepted negatively. However, if this film is reviewed critically in the light of its purely cinematic content and considered on the basis of its elementary filmic legitimacy, which is essential to cinema-art, the results immediately become positive.

Recognizing Ozep as a product of the strictly scientific Soviet film-school, we have in him a film director of highly individual mold. We are dealing here with

a man of great skill who has conquered the A-B-C of montage and permeated it with his own genius and creative power.

Not once are we conscious in this film of a deliberately placed design; never are we aware of the movement of the camera, nor do we feel that the racing, staccato cuts of the carriage-ride, for example, are merely a display of acquired knowledge. Throughout the picture, the harmony of image-values is consummated in a perfect symphony. The camera is ever the experiencing eye of the spectator, or the piercing vision of the protagonist himself. At all times the complete collectivism of the filmic apparatus is under the dominant control of the director.

With sweeping brush-strokes the opening sequence is depicted.

First various placements of a locomotive in deep night atmosphere. Smoking funnel, wheels, the engine (boiler), then the moving semaphores. In each image, steam and smoke in action. These image-values blend together in organic sequence. Then we see and hear an accordion, its rhythm replacing the previous metric musical accompaniment which accentuated the preceding scenes.

Without seeing the railroad station or the train in totality, nor the rails leading into some landscape, by this means of analytical montage-forms we are familiarized with the whole location and atmosphere.

Special emphasis is placed particularly on the locomotive. It is a symbol of power. It takes on an over-tonal significance, creating a thought-association with the action that follows (Dmitri's farewell to Katharina).

The scant dialogue, which serves to explain the reason of Dmitri's departure—(a trip to his father to gain consent to marry Katharina and thus secure 3000 rubles)—is strengthened by these specific image-values of the locomotive. Panting, boiling, spouting steam, the locomotive represses its power until the conductor's signal designates the starting-time.

The semaphores begin to move, and again we see, in detail, the specific parts of the locomotive. More smoke and steam come into view, and as the locomotive gradually moves out of the picture, we quickly switch to the action. Dmitri hurriedly, as his train starts slowly in motion, grabs a huge bouquet of flowers from a little flower-girl standing in the foreground. He gives these flowers to Katharina, embraces and kisses her, and jumps on the platform of the train, which, speeding up in tempo, pulls out of the screen.

Motionless, arms limp at her side, Katharina stands there, with her back to the camera. (This static posture and demeanor of Katharina is maintained through the whole film.) And as the last coach with its tail-light disappears into the distance and in the back-

ground reigns complete darkness, the flower-girl standing on the right side of the picture-frame steps up to Katharina and draws here attention to the fact that "the lieutenant forgot to pay for the flowers."

Katharina gives her the amount. And with this the first sequence closes.

Dmitri's trip serves the purpose of sustaining, or conveying, the tension through the lap dissolve into the next sequence.

Location: His father's estate. Introduction of Ivan, the servant Smerdyakov, and the old man, awaiting the visit of Gruschenka. This filmically plastic creation of the old Karamazov is superb. His crude directness establishes him as the strongest figure and as the center of the action. The old man is an autocrat of licentiousness, a monarch whose unbroken nature knows no partiality. Deeply convinced of the utility of immorality, he drinks in life like a draught of cognac. Only the most expressive elements are used and effectively sketched in the portrayal of his character.

In contrast to the long shot of the vast entrance-hall, shown at full range, in the old man's room only single objects are touched upon. The room in its totality is never shown. A table with tid-bits is painstakingly arranged (seen from above, downward) and becomes the visual center of the scene. A set table and anticipation. An ikon, characterizing splendidly the vitality and the shrewd religiosity of the old fellow. The flame of ilfe still flickers. (And how it flickers!) A lace ornamented bed-cover has been drawn back and the silken bedding lies open, pointing to the sexual contemplations of the old libertine. In various placements, we see him restlessly pacing the floor. He is full of eager expectation. His hands move nervously about the table, making a few quick adjustments.

Now the action changes to exteriors on the street. A pouring rain is indicated in a few specific medium closeups. Rain on the front porch, rain from the waterspout, rain in the gutter. The mood of rain assumes a dramatic significance. Then, in medium shot, we see the entrance to the mansion. A carriage (focus, side-view) drives up. This placement shows merely the lower parts of the carriage. The horses' legs, wheels and carriage-step, Dmitri's legs, as they step from the carriage, come into the field of vision. Then cut, seen from above, across the driver's back, toward Dmitri. He pays the driver his fee, and the carriage drives out of scene. Dmitri walks up to the entrance and pulls the bell-strap. Cut to closeup of the bell in the interior of the hallway, as it rings. Reaction of Karamazov.

The huge, massive door of the interior, securely locked and bolted with a heavy iron rod, serves as a symbol of the greed and avarice of the elder Karamazov. In great excitement, with trembling hands, he pours a glass of champagne. He thinks: "Who can this be? It must be Gruschenka, of course!"

Then, in the spacious hallway, Smerdyakov comes walking stealthily toward the door. He steps out of frame. The movement is repeated in medium closeup as he reappears immediately in front of the entrance door. He opens the big lock and lifts the heavy iron bolt, not, however, before he has taken one last, critically vain glance at himself in the mirror. (Gruschenka.)

Dmitri enters through the open doorway and steps into the interior of the house. Disappointed surprise

is clearly manifested by Smerdyakov and Ivan. After a short passage of dialogue, Dmitri walks toward the door of his father's room. The door opens and the old fellow stands radiantly on the threshold. He recognizes his son Dmitri. His joyous mood suddenly changes. His features become distorted into a reaction of disappointment and rage. Dmitri unsuspectingly takes the glass of champagne out of the old man's hand and empties it in one draught. Result: mutual misunderstanding produces short circuit and explosion within the elder Karamazov.

The discussion that now follows between father and son occurs behind locked doors. We become aware of the conflict from the reactions of Smerdyakov and Ivan, who are listening in the big hallway.

Without ever being able to understand a single word, we hear in this long shot the quarrel between the old fellow and Dmitri. The tempo of this incomprehensible dialogue rises rhythmically to a crescendo, skillfully interrupted by significant pauses. It reaches a raging *furioso* when the door opens abruptly and Dmitri emerges in excited agitation. Through the half-open door he screams at the old fellow, whom we cannot see, that he (Dmitri) "will force a change in existing conditions. Just wait and see"; he "will go directly to Gruschenka." On the word "Gruschenka" the scene lap dissolves into her home. Dmitri asks to be admitted.

With the fade-out from the Karamazov mansion, the cardinal point of the tragedy is established.

The types in their various characteristics are revealed one after another, in sequential order, and their temporary relations to each other unfold the carefully constructed framework behind the dramatic action. Here, dramaturgically speaking, the motive of the "deed" is for the first time defined. (Smerdyakov's words: "He will yet murder him.")

The leading motive of the plot has been sketched. It proves of extraordinary advantage in the linking up and the dramatic evaluation of the plot, that the brothers Karamazov were formerly separated and meet here, for the first time, in the stifling atmosphere of the father's home. Later the old man's conduct leads them to an open utterance of their views.

The role of the third son in the novel is dispensed with in the filmic adaptation, but is partly substituted by Smerdyakov. He alone is made a confidant to old Karamazov and serves as mediator between Dmitri and Ivan, two antagonistic elements, and between the hostile women, Katharina and Gruschenka, who in the later course of events widen the gap between the brothers.

Dmitri at Gruschenka's house. At the entrance-door, the maid-servant tries to explain to Dmitri that it is impossible for Gruschenka to see him as she has visitors and is on the point of leaving. But Dmitri is obstinate and refuses to be turned away. The servant reports to her mistress.

In medium shot we see Gruschenka surrounded by her friends as they prepare to leave. Indignant, she commands the servant not to admit this man under any conditions.

Suddenly she stops in the midst of her speech and sees: Cut to medium close shot: Dmitri in the frame of the door.

Cut to close shot: Gruschenka as seen from Dmitri's point of view. Cut back to Dmitri: his eyes drop slowly as they "size up" his opposite.

This radical cut from Gruschenka and the surrounding group to the closeup of Dmitri arouses in the spectator a sensation of Dmitri having been hurled into the room and the anticipation of an explosion to follow. However, nothing happens. Instead, Dmitri accepts, with the meekness of a lamb, Gruschenka's mocking challenge to await her return to the apartment. Gayly, she tosses the remark at him: "If you want to wait?—but it may be very late!"

This wide-treatment of "waiting" is symbolized by a bronze mantel-clock with a ball-shaped pendulum that moves in rotation. The rotating pendulum is later repeated in closeup.

The dramaturgical structure of this scene is organized in parallel lines. The one element is time as it passes—waiting; the other is accomplished through dialogue—the servant's story, which exposes Gruschenka's past life to Dmitri.

Late in the night Gruschenka returns to her apartment. Now comes the explosion. The big scene between Gruschenka and Dmitri reveals for the first time the depths of her nature.

Noteworthy in this scene is the direct (radical) cut to a closeup of an angora cat. Its existence was not established beforehand. The cat serves as first-class plastic material to express the catlike nature of Gruschenka. Both values are mutually equivalent.

The dramatic interpretation of Anna Sten, who with her art embodies the colorful character of Gruschenka to perfection, cannot be valued highly enough. It is fascinating to observe how she makes use of a picture of Katharina, which has dropped from Dmitri's pocket, and lets it serve as a means of practising her wiles on him. She is all winning smiles, promises and softest allurements one minute, and the mewing, striking, primitive, cat-nature the next.

As she leaps on the chair, we reach the climax—the kiss. This struggle for the kiss is most provocatively and effectively handled by means of a series of flash-cuts in medium shot.

The constant pattering of the night rain as it rattles against the window-panes serves as a visual counterpoint to the erotically laden atmosphere of the interior.

The strongest and most expressive moment of the film is Dmitri's departure at early dawn.

Ozep works here with overtones and uses the play of nature's elements for the structure of Dmitri's mood and his emotional reactions.

Exterior: Entrance to Gruschenka's house. Medium close shot on Dmitri. Behind him the door swings shut. He takes a step forward. Lost in thought, he removes his cap. His dazed eyes glance up.

Cut to open sky. Cut back to Dmitri. Cut to morning landscape. Nature breathes. The night's rain still lingers in the trees. Cut back to Dmitri. He takes a deep breath. His glance goes heavenward. Again the sky and passing clouds. Then a bush. In its branches drops of water that glisten like diamonds. Close shot on the drops of water. They fall to the ground. Cut back to Dmitri in medium closeup. He becomes aware of the waterspout as a small stream dribbles down from the roof. He stretches out his hand. Lets it fill up and thoughtfully cools his brow.

In totality shot, Dmitri cleanses himself of the night; he wanders out into the fresh morning air, prepared for the day.

The gripping effect of these scenes is by no means evoked by the esthetic value of these nature-images, but is produced by use of "overtone montage," which emerges as a living symbol *between* the image-values, that is, *within* the picture-cut.

A symbol is vital, significant, when it presents the best chosen, highest possible expression of the anticipated vision, of facts not known, or but vaguely known, to the spectator. Under these conditions, the symbol effects "unconscious" participation. It formulates an act of "unconsciousness." The more general this act becomes, the more general, the broader, becomes its sphere of reaction, for it touches in everyone a familiar note.

The structure of the preceding sequence deals with three phases of the dramatic line-up:

1. Dmitri—Katharina
2. Dmitri—Father
3. Father—Gruschenka—Dmitri

As the action of the film, after the "raindrop scenes" moves increasingly into a gigantic mass of conflicts, and the prescribed length of a commercial film does not permit it to do full justice to these conflicts by developing them along the line of a strictly Dostoevskian interpretation, from now on the film loses somewhat its power of impression and it does not intensify itself again until it comes to the sequence of the "night of the murder."

However, if we wish to split up these manifold sequences, it is possible to describe superficially this increasingly powerful flow of action as the phases of:

4. Murder
5. Court-trial
6. Gruschenka—Dmitri

Moving-camera shots have become a fad in Hollywood. With very few exceptions, the camera is at all times in motion: it turns, lifts, lowers, etc. Very rarely, however, have these Hollywood camera-movements any organic connection with the content of the scene. They are a form of cheap exhibitionism, not used of necessity, but because of a craving for vulgar, gaudy showing-off. Static placements connected by direct cuts would be far more plausible than these contorted methods, which merely weaken the desired impression.

In contrast to this, when Ozep sets his camera in motion in *Karamazov*, he has good reason for doing so. His camera-movements are in the highest degree organically related to the content. The results obtained by Ozep in the instances where his camera moves are results that could not be so simply achieved by static placements (direct cuts). His movements dovetail and melt into the scene. Ozep permits his camera to step into action only when through its movement, the rhythmic line of the filmic whole is advanced and the harmonious building-up of the complete structure is thereby guaranteed.

An example of an Ozep camera-movement:

With a fade-in, we see in closeup, in a mirror, a contorted reflection of someone's head. The camera moves backwards. We become aware that the surface of the mirror is the glistening roundness of a samovar.

The camera moves on. The back of a waiter steps into frame; we recognize his head as the one reflected in the mirrored surface of the samovar. With childish vanity, he examines his hair-comb. With his right hand he adjust the line of the part. With the left hand he holds a service-tray. In waiter-fashion, he pulls it up high. A few glasses, filled to the brim, come into frame. He skilfully balances the tray above his shoulders and walks with hasty steps toward the farthest end of the picture. At closeup range, the camera follows behind the waiter, throughout the room. In the composition of the frame we see the waiter's head, shoulders and the tray. In the distant background, through a doorway, we see the interior of a billiard-room. The waiter enters this room. The camera follows him and then stops, as the waiter steps up to Dmitri and serves him a drink.

Samovar—vanity of waiter—drinks—spaciousness of room—guests—in a word, the entire scenic atmosphere is effectively compressed into one single placement and the nervous restlessness of Dmitri, by means of this camera-objectification, is illustrated for the spectator.

Ozep, in particular, lays great stress on the compositional value of the scent. All optical appearances—architecture—furniture—objects of all kinds, are in every case placed as advantageously as possible in the picture-frame, so that they *accentuate* the content of the scenic action. Ozep forces the spectator to see only that which is absolutely necessary for his understanding or that which is later to refresh his memory. All other elements are ruthlessly discarded and eliminated from the picture. Only the most important, which contains positive significance for the scenic content at hand, is thrown into strong relief.

For the picturization of the night of the murder, Ozep resorts to the three "notorious" dashes of Dostoevskian fame, the use of which brought upon the great Russian author severe criticism for having touched on the technique of a mediocre detective-novel. These dashes are cheap as they cause the reader to pass through unsolved tension and cunningly leave him at a loss as to who it was that committed the murder. Ozep also makes use of this sensational "WHO"? He poses it as a formal question here, as a formal question there. But at least Ozep's film-dramaturgy justifies this particular application of the method.

Ozep builds the Russian landscape into the murder-affair. Nature's elements serve as putty and cement for the construction of supermundane realities. Moonlight-night—a tree stump—a howling dog—a bush—the illumined window—wind—blowing curtains—the fence—the man—the entire scene is enveloped in an uncanny atmosphere. Everything is charged with a premonitory sense of weird happenings.

This "overtone" montage of the murder-night (*Mordnacht-montage*) Ozep also applies to Dmitri's night-ride in the carriage. This episode starts slowly in long shot. As the camera turns about, gradually, in the distance the carriage comes into view. The elements of the picture carriage—horses—avenue—trees—tree-trunks—tree-tops—sky—landscape—horses—horses' legs—driver—drive whipping up the horses—by degrees fall into a speeding-up, racing staccato of flash cuts. All becomes a mad race, a raving, scream-

ing; in short, a perfect symbol of Dmitri's inner turmoil and his yearning to get to Gruschenka, speedily, immediately.

His arrival at the pleasure-house and his search for Gruschenka are magnificently solved by means of image-technique. The camera follows his every step through the various rooms and delicately accentuates his nervous impatience. The erotic atmosphere violently increases its pressure until Karamazov finally discovers Gruschenka on the upper floor, side by side with her former lover.

Then lightning strikes as Dmitri's *chambre-separee* blissfulness is abruptly cut short by a harsh knock from the police.

Ozep's exceptional filmic insight proclaims itself also in the extremely clever weighing of the image and sound values. The image-conception always comes first. The dialogue is reduced to a minimum, and sound and music are artfully applied as an accentuation of the visualization-process. (Cf. sound-treatment of kettle-drum and bells in the long carriage-ride.)

It should, however, be mentioned that the hellish tempo of the carriage-ride and the orgy of intoxication occupy too great a space in the rhythmic construction of the whole, and take the breath away, so to speak, from the court-room scene, which should really have been the high point of the film since it contains the *denouement* and the untangling of the story's threads.

Here, Ozep missed a wonderful opportunity for a rhythmically organized, logical decomposition of the tension. Though he carried the action of Ivan-Smerdyakov in a parallel line with the court scenes, it nevertheless ended in a blind alley, for Smerdyakov's appearance at court does not enter the field of vision, despite the fact that by means of Smerdyakov's confession that he himself is the murderer of the elder Karamazov, Smerdyakov without anything further becomes the conveyor of tention of the whole situation.

Example of the parallel action:

Court-trial—Ivan at Smerdyakov's

Court-trial—Smerdyakov confesses

Court-trial—Ivan and Smerdyakov on the way to the court-house

Court-trial—Ivan and Smerdyakov at the entrance of the court-house

Court-trial—Ivan steps up to the judge Smerdyakov

in the ante-room

—Court-Trial; Ivan reveals.

Ante-room

without Smerdyakov

—Court-trial; clerk announces to the judge the suicide of Smerdyakov.

The end of the film bursts out into a refrain which thematically is a pure adaptation of Tolston.

With sweeping brush-strokes Dmitri's deportation and Gruschenka's voluntary accompaniment of him into exile, are depicted. A locomotive is ready to go. Smoking funnel, wheels, the engine (boiler), then the moving semaphores,—in short, all the image-elements of the beginning of the film are repeated, until finally the trains pull out. Behind an iron-grated window, Dmitri; on the platform of the end car, Gruschenka; and then train pulls out, panting, boiling, steaming into the landscape, toward Siberia.

BULLETIN NO. 1 OF THE MEXICAN CINE CLUB

The Cine Club of Mexico has been organized and affiliated with the Film Society of London and with the League of Cine Clubs of Paris. Its program is the same as that of the cine clubs throughout the world, but it is especially akin to the Spanish Cine Club which has achieved great success in the two years of its existence.

The essential points of its program are: (1) to procure the showing of good European, American and Asiatic vanguard films; (b) to establish the educational cinema, with special attention to the systematic showing of scientific films; (c) to study the History of the Cinema by means of film-exhibits dealing with the cinema in retrospect; (d) to hold lectures on the esthetic, scientific and social importance of cinematography; (e) to create a favorable atmosphere out of which a Mexican cinema art may emerge.

The Mexican Cine Club will follow the plan of the successful foreign cine clubs in linking its activities with a conscientious study of our necessities. Its purpose is highly social and not lucrative.

The Executive Committee of the Cine Club is comprised of the following:

Art Director: Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano.
Technical Director: Emilio Amero.
Secretaries of Finance: Manuel Alvarez Bravo
Maria Izquierdo.
Sec'y of Propaganda: Carlos Merida.
Directors: Maria M. de Alvarez Bravo and Roberto Montenegro.
General Secretary: Agustin Aragon Leiva.

The organizers of the Cine Club are among the most serious-minded writers, artists, journalists and critics in Mexico, who have been able to see that our environment is a sufficiently cultured and mature to make possible the existence of a Cine Club whose prime mission is to give the cinema the place which it deserves as a powerful vehicle of culture.

In order to make known the circumstances which have determined the creation of the Cine Club and to point out the details of its program, these organizers will shortly circulate a manifesto calling for general active cooperation in the establishment and functioning of the Mexican Cine Club.

By-laws of the Mexican Cine Club

Article 1. The Cine Club's social residence will be in Mexico City.

Article 2. The object of the Cine Club is:

- (a) to show films, provided by the Film Society of London, the International League of Cine Clubs, the Film Amateurs' League and similar organizations as well as films which in the opinion of the Cine Club directors merit consideration at the Club's sessions. To cooperate in the establishment of a Mexican cinematography.
- (b) to show factory-films of high artistic quality, either at the expense of the Cine Club itself or in combination with some promoting management.

(c) to organize lectures and publish articles and critical reviews on cinematography.

(d) to work for the establishment of the educational cinema by means of scientific films; to see that the social function which cinematography can fulfill be made effective in Mexico.

Article 3. The Mexican Cine Club proposes to work together with the foreign cine clubs, but at the same time to investigate the problems of its own surroundings.

Article 4. The Cine Club will be comprised of an unlimited number of members. These will be divided into active members and subscribing members. Active members and subscribers will pay the same amount of dues and will enjoy equal rights, but active members will be given various duties to fulfill.

Article 5. Active members are obliged to cooperate by means of work and commissions toward the development of the Cine Club. Their number will be unlimited, but every candidate for membership must be proposed by two active members in good standing and be passed upon by the respective committee.

Article 6. Any person, without distinction of nationality or social category, may become a subscribing member of the Cine Club.

Article 7. Active and subscribing members of the Cine Club have the following social rights: (a) to attend all the cinematographic sessions of the Cine Club; (b) to enjoy any privilege which the Cine Club may obtain for its members.

Article 8. The sessions of the Cine Club will be of two kinds: business and cinematographic. Only active members will be entitled to attend the former. The cinematographic sessions will be held at stated intervals, preferably every month as soon as this is possible. They will consist of the showing of films, of short lectures, reading of reports, suggestions, etc.

Article 9. The cinematographic sessions will be public, and non-members will pay an admission charge. The difference between the total dues and that of the admission charges, together with the right to receive mail at the club's post-office box, constitute the member's privilege.

Article 10. Those joining the Cine Club will pay a membership fee of one peso, Mexican silver currency, and monthly dues of one peso fifty centavos, Mexican silver currency. Payments will be made in advance.

Article 11. Each member of the Cine Club will receive two tickets for every cinematographic session and a 25 percent discount on tickets obtained from non-members.

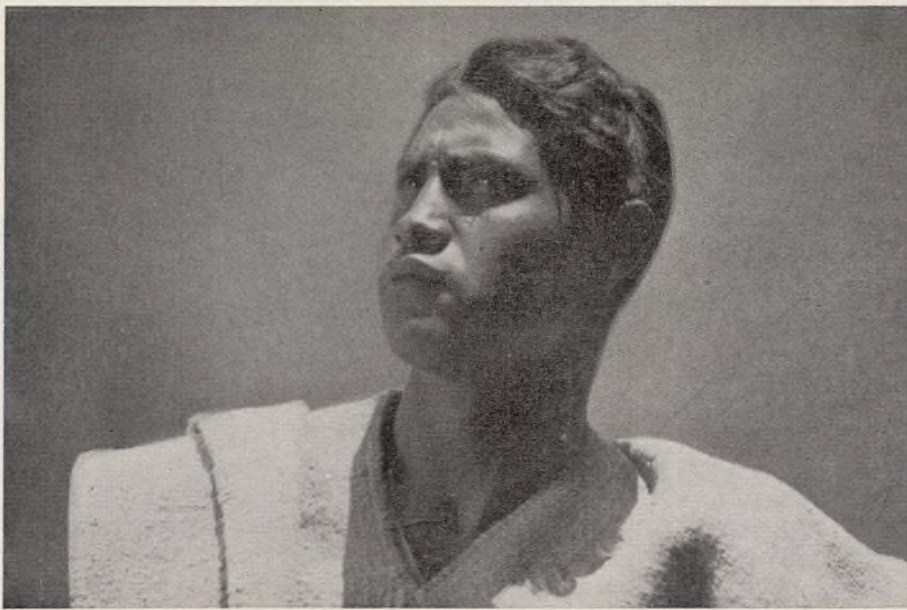
Article 12. The administration of the Cine Club will be carried on through a Directorial Council consisting of an Art Director, a Technical Director, a General Secretary, two Secretaries of Finance, a Secretary of Propaganda and two Directors. This Council will be elected by the active members for a period of two years.

Article 13. When the Cine Club attains a membership of one thousand, it will form itself into a Cooperative Society, Ltd.

Article 14. The financial reserves which the Cine Club may possibly own at some future date will be spent on artistic films to be produced by the Cine Club itself.

Mexico City, June 4, 1931.

General Sec'y., Agustin Aragon Leiva.



Close up of Martin Hernandez, the Mexican-Indian

Mexican peons, watching from a hilltop the passing funeral . . .





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ILYA ZACHAROVITCH TRAUBERG

Russia's Youngest Film Director

There is a curious tradition in the Hollywood movie-industry that in order to be able to direct films a man must be close to middle-age or beyond. Direction of feature films is considered to be a task beyond the power and capacity of young men and women in their early twenties. The case of Ilya Trauberg, however, gives the lie to the tradition, and, like so many other achievements of the Soviet cinema, it reveals again that the things which Hollywood says are "impossible" or "impractical," are both possible and practical.

Ilya Trauberg is a graduate pupil of Eisenstein,—the latter's most renowned student. He is the youngest director in Russia, an outstanding example of how the Soviet Union encourages the development of young talent and gives it a chance to function. Here in capitalist America, the so-called "land of opportunity" (sic!), there is no chance whatever for working-class youth in the field of art. This is especially the case in the cinema, where the only opportunity for "youth" to function is in the eventuality of its being related to some powerful movie mogul. But then, the basic difference is one between sheer prostitution of brains and energy for vulgar commercial purposes on the one hand, and the utilization of energy for the creation of artistic masterpieces on the other hand.

Thus, Trauberg, who is now twenty-five years of age, has made three films of eminent artistic importance: *Metal*, *The Stormy Way*, and *China Express*. His fourth picture is in production now. Of these three, *China Express* is the best known to the Western world. It was a first-rate success in Germany, England, other European countries, and in the United States.

In a letter to the editors of *Experimental Cinema*, Trauberg gives some interesting information:

"Though I am twenty-five years old, I have been working in the cinema for six years already, three of which I worked as a critic and theorist and during

this period was interested mostly in American pictures. Under the guidance of Eisenstein, my outlook was changed and shaped. Only by working with him did I begin to understand—what cinema is.

"My first independent work dates from 1928—an educational (culture) film, *Stormy Way*, the subject of which was the automobile industry and railroad-building in U.S.S.R. It was an attempt to wipe out the distinction between "art films" and educational films. It was an attempt to create a genre of feuilleton. This task was fulfilled to a certain degree, in spite of many mistakes. The genre is now widely established and used in Soviet cinema.

"Next work: *China Express*. This seems to me to assemble all the sins and infatuations of my youth.

"Later I created a long film (based on documents)—*Metal*, the subject of which was the Socialistic up-building of heavy industry.

"Now I am engaged in talkies and tone-films. They give me the inspiration to learn and work anew. Great ideas, mostly concerning montage, which we want to fulfill in spite of very poor mechanical equipment, excite us and force us to look at things from a new angle. In these questions I fully agree with the *Manifesto on Sound by Eisenstein*, which you no doubt know.*

"A present I am writing a scenario about the psychology of a European worker, who is nearing revolution I am making a complete survey of my method of creation, my views in all lines concerning moving picture direction, beginning with the construction of the scenario to the composition of the "shot" and every small detail of the work. I am trying to find out new ways of expression, of emotional influence—more simple, more popular and more realistic. I am trying to resuscitate the genre of melodrama in order to serve the aims of our ideological understandings (principles) The main figure of my picture is man, his psyche, his reconstruction."**

Trauberg is now working in the studios of Lenin-grad. His assistant is Herbert Marshall, a young English student who went to Russia three years ago to study montage in the Moscow Film University. When Marshall has completed his apprenticeship with Trauberg he will be given an opportunity to direct his own films.

In an early issue, *Experimental Cinema* will publish an essay by Trauberg dealing with his directorial methods and montage-conceptions.

* Trauberg refers to the famous *Manifesto on the Sound Film* which was collectively written, signed and issued by Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Pudovkin last year.

** These quotations are from a personal letter that Trauberg sent to the editors of *Experimental Cinema*. The letter was written in English and the quotations are exact excerpts from the main text of the letter.

TRAUBERG STILLs

2. Trauberg's latest film, now in production. The film is as yet untitled. It deals with the approaching revolution in Europe.

1. *China Express*.

3. *Metal*.

4. *China Express*.

5. Ilya Zacharovitch Trauberg.

6. Production-still from *China Express*. Trauberg is seated next to the camera.

7. Herbert Marshall and Ilya Trauberg on a Soviet movie-set. Marshall, the English film-student, is working with Trauberg as part of his course of study in the Moscow Cinema University.

8. *Stormy Way*, Trauberg's first film (1928).

9. *China Express*.

A LETTER FROM MOSCOW

During the Revolution celebrations of November, there was shown in Moscow and Leningrad the third (following *The Road to Life* and *Alone*) big Soviet sound film, *Mountains of Gold*, or *Golden Hills*, directed by Jutkevitch. This picture was produced in the Leningrad Film Studios, which also made the sound film *Alone* and the silent film, *China Express*.

In its silent sections, *Mountains of Gold* is greatly influenced by Pudovkin's silent films, *Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg*. The types and the situations are very similar, although, of course, they are based directly on the history of a political strike in the biggest metal-plant of old St. Petersburg, the Putilov-Works. If you would merely see the stills, you would think Jutkevitch is a second Pudovkin!

What about the story itself? I shall quote to you what I wrote recently in the *Moscow News*:

"The cast being limited to three characters only, the films offer great opportunities for 'plot development.' The films show two workers against the background of a large metal works in old Petersburg in the days before the World War.

"The first is a class-conscious worker who understands the conflicting interests of the capitalists and the proletariat. The other, a peasant who has just been ruined by the local landowner, has come to town for the sole purpose of earning enough money to buy himself a horse and return to his native village.

"However, as the plot unfolds itself, the class-conscious proletarian recognizes that although the boss of the works is his enemy, he bribes his servants with silver watches.

"The silver watch becomes the *leit-motif* of the whole film.

"The first worker, who has just received a silver watch as a gift from the boss for betraying his fellow-workers, repairs to the nearest saloon and sings the song of the 'Golden Hills'—or the 'Mountains of Gold'—that is, the mountains of gold which he will heap up while working for his boss."

This, of course, is by no means a new idea. We saw it happen with Ivan, the hero of *End of St. Petersburg*. But, of course, it has a very important political value: to show all young people how the situation was before the World War and the conditions under which the working class was living at that time.

But the main power of the film is in the sound: the dialogue and the music. The complete text of the talk of the peasant, just coming from the village, was written by the great master of the Russian language, Chapigin (Leningrad). And the way in which this talk is used is very remarkable. There are long dia-

logues, and also monologues, but they are never tiresome. Why?

In answering this question, I shall first relate an excellent observation made by the Soviet film-journalist, Leo Mur, during a discussion of talkies over the radio. He said that long speeches in themselves need not be so tiresome. We become tired, seeing long talkies, not by reason of the length of the speeches, but by reason of the length of the suitable silent part of the film—the photography. It is because, says Leo Mur, we "understand" (apprehend) those things which we see, much quicker than those which we hear.

And so it really is. By vision, by purely visual means, we can project movement very easily; less easily, emotion; and with difficulty, thought. There are, though, more instances of the projection of thought in Soviet pictures, than in the pictures of America and other countries. And in speech, there is a big difference between rendering an emotion and a thought. The only thing is that we must expend more time and attention than we do in conveying movement.

But in the movie, we can connect the talk with vision, as we wish, and combine very rapid speech with speedy change of images. So it was done in *Mountains of Gold*, although not in a very pure and convincing form.

For example—the worker, coming from the village, tells about the way his "farm" is managed. This is a monologue, and a very slow monologue. But it is not tiresome, because during this speech we see on the screen silent scenes about which the speech is concerned.

This device is used through the bigger half of the film.

The other device is the manner of using music. There is simple music, illustrating those things which we see on the screen. But it does not cease as the scene is finished. As in the art of fugue, the mutual pursuit of voices or parts (one of the most important forms of music) is continuous all through the film. It provides a kind of background for the whole subject, and it illustrates the inner emotions of the players—and of the audience as well! In *Mountains of Gold* there is a double fugue, a fugue which begins with two parts and two subjects simultaneously. The one is the song, *Mountains of Gold* (based on the theme-idea of the picture); the other is a simple waltz for wind-orchestra, composed by Shostakovitch. This one is the more important of the two. We hear them in beautiful growing calm in the first scene, when the peasants are coming to the metal plant inquiring about some work. Then, in the scenes of bribery with the silver watch, the music *meadows* like a Hawaiian guitar.

And at the end, in a furious fortissimo of the whole symphonic orchestra, it storms through the scene where the silver watch is hurled back at the boss.

There are also some excellent scenes in a bar, where the drunken talk of the hero (he has just received the silver watch) is played against the background of the strongest old *tsigani* (gypsy) romance-music.

But it would take too long to relate everything about this film. It is more a work of art than *The Road to Life* and more popular than *Alone*. There is one outstanding fault in *Mountains of Gold*—some parts are too long. But I am sure Amkino will show it in California in more suitable length. In my opinion it would also be better named *The Silver Watch* or *Silver Hills*.

The Road to Life and *Alone* are two big sound films which Amkino has not yet shown in America.* They are now making their trip from one European capital to another. The success of *The Road to Life* is tremendous. It is not only the first great Soviet sound film, but also the first Soviet box-office picture. It ran two months in one "movie palace" in Berlin, then several consecutive weeks in twenty-three other first-class Berlin theatres. There has been no equally artistic picture since the time of *Storm Over Asia* by Pudovkin.

The young director of *The Road to Life*, Nicolai Ekk of Mezhrabpomfilm, was several years ago a simple actor in Meyerhold's Theatre, just as the author of the scenario of *Mountains of Gold* was a movie-architect and director of small, and esthetically "dry," films, without subject matter.

What are we waiting to see on the screen during the next few months?

The next big picture will be *The House of the Dead*, produced by Mezhrabpomfilm studios. It is being directed by Federov,* a former assistant of Meyerhold. The continuity of this film was written by our famous theoretician of literature, Victor Shklovsky, who has written many scenarios and continuities (*Bulat Batir*,

The Family Scotinini, *The Daughter of the Captain*, and other historical-literary movie-subjects).

The story of the *House of the Dead* is also taken from literature.** There was a novel by Dostoevsky, *The Chronicle of the House of the Dead* ("house of the dead"—the jail. Shklovsky has changed the situation. He has made Dostoevsky himself the hero of the film—because the novel itself was written by Dostoevsky when he was in Siberia as a political prisoner. As in *The Road to Life*, there are fine songs in *The House of the Dead*, songs of the Siberian prisoners.

We are also awaiting a big film by Dovzhenko, the famous creator of the silent, but great, *Earth* (called in America, *Soil*). This new film deals with the problems of a human being under the conditions of the period of socialist reconstruction of society. The picture is entitled *Ivan* (Russian name for John), a title which is not less important or significant than the title *Earth*. "Ivan" is one of the workers on Dnieperstroy, the huge dam and power plant that is being built on the Dneiper River of the Ukraine.

Next time, after seeing the *House of the Dead*, wholly, and not in parts only (as now), I shall write you more about it.

*Since this letter arrived, as we go to press, we learn that the *House of the Dead* has been finished and shown in Moscow—Ed. Note.

**Federov is the director of the stage-spectacle *Roar, China!*, by S. Tretjanov, produced at Meyerhold's Theatre. This spectacle was highly praised in Germany.—N. Solew.

Roar, China! was put on by the Theatre Guild in New York City two seasons ago. Over and against the vehement protestations of Rouben Mamoulian, the director, the Theatre Guild insisted on emasculating the political ideology of Tretjanov's original manuscript. Bourgeois dictatorship.—Ed. Note.

REMARKS ON CINE-LANGUAGE

Continued from page 24

afar a naval battle, an eruption of a vulcano, or the surface of the moon,—as well as the "class struggle," the inside of a drop of blood, etc.

Such is the field for "macro-," "micro-" and "tele-" shooting. (Microscopic and telescopic.)

I want to add that it is also possible to apply to cinematographic uses the X-Ray tube, and so to pierce through, with the camera, the walls of a house, or see the inside processes of an organism. Furthermore, a plate, sensitive to the infra-red rays, could even "see" through the mist and night.

6.

To conclude: One of the many fundamental differences between the typical "Hollywood" and the Russian film-workers is this: While in Hollywood they work

relying on instinct, "horse sense," empirically acquired knowledge of tricks, camera angles and situations regulated by the indications of the box-office, in Russia, on the other hand, the Soviet film-worker strives to build a rational theory of his art, analyzing it in its infinitesimal formal elements, analyzing at the same time the structure of society. For, to reflect it on the screen—and to transform it into reality—is the function of cinema art.

ERRATA: In the above article, *A Few Remarks on the Elements of Cine-Language*, we wish to call the reader's attention to the following correction: The first sentence on the fifth line, second column, page 24, should read as follows: "The choice of words (as Hamlet says, we read only 'words, words, words' . . .) their disposition in a sentence—their rhythmical flow" etc., etc., etc. . . .

HIGHWAY 66

Montage Notes for a Documentary Film

"Rjechevsky has the virtue, his aims being limited, to pose problems bravely before the director; he determines the emotional content and the sense of the film without determining the visual contours."—*Pudovkin*.

- Limp cities alike in their escapes and conquests
- Concordant traffic
- Dumb hordes long out of work
- Prowling
- Their vigilance confined to passing women and their bodies who turn away
- A sudden thrust for space! from daring offers of recognition and a vise-like need of them
- And their bodies
- KODAK AS YOU GO!
- SOUTH PENN SQUARE!
- Weeping willows for men or what's left of them to dump their past there
- To wallow in, to reflect and suffer again their wrinkled history;
- For the police to trample in unconcern of pilgrims' weariness to begone
- And bedamned!
- DO NOT THROW RUBBISH AROUND!
- A sudden radio pronouncement
- While you're jostled in the street from the quick perception of
- Apples
- Unemployed who covet the beggars' cup
- Citizens!
- Torsos and ankles
- The undulation of a calve or breast calling for a hand to plumb and survey
- Its greek fecundity!
- Faces
- Prolix and stained
- In format vigilant
- Pouched in decay
- Caloried
- Sticky with time
- Rapt and furrowed
- METROPOLITAN!
- FOUR OUT OF FIVE HAVE IT!
- Shop windows
- unrestrained and lying
- their faces bewildering
- And court-plastered;
- The clangor of "SALE" notices
- The zigzag of "REDUCTIONS" ...

- "PAY AS YOU EARN!"
- The peering newspapers preaching their corruption
- In trumpet-grandeur and lusty conclusion.
- "ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO PRINT!"
- A Greta Garbo sign
- Vibrant
- Throbbing to adolescents
- and nomads stamped down like grapes in sweat
- Its electric hallucination.
- "FLESH AND THE DEVIL"
- Department Stores
- Woolworth the A and P's
- counters busy with wives
- Bargaining and impatient with unwanted children who are as reconciled as their parents.
- "Papa Loves Mamma Mamma Loves Papa Every Thing is Rosy Now!"*
- Skyscrapers babbling to God in their heterogeneous stammer
- And confusing man and beast in their braggadocio.
- "Roar of Cities has musical undertone!"*
- The Carnegie Library
- Severe and uninhabited
- Fiction for the Sabbath
- And librarians of ephemeral sex
- "SILENCE PLEASE!"
- The Deposits in the men's room and axiom of its walls;
- "SOME COME HERE TO"
- 13th precinct
- Cages and complex excrement
- The writing on the wall
- Scratches by men awaiting daylight
- Excavating lice
- And shuddering
- From vermin and the cold
- Scratching, scratching for others to follow
- Or for the law to erase:
- "Tully Filmus who left this jail for Joliet!"*
- "They put me here for ridin' the rods, I wanted to see things—Charley "KID" Weisberg"*
- Apartment houses
- Hotel-pimps and gamblers
- Prostitutes

-Kept women smoking the day away
 with rummy
 gin and recount
 of yesteryear's harlotry!
 "A RADIO IN EVERY ROOM!"
 -Speakeasy
 -Women gleam
 and wrest away laughter
 and bewilderment
 -Witness greed and wanton breath
 -Muster wails
 -Set griffins into flight;
 -Taut lovers reprieve themselves
 -And sound new pacts
 -Somehow a cuspidor.
 -Typists and secretaries
 describing their new "thrill"
 and new "ensemble"
 -emerging with desire
 "True Stories"
 read in intervals
 -Of office slack, lavatory duty
 -Subway run.
 -Real estate men, lawyers and clerk
 -Salesmen
 who collect at quick-lunches
 -All the day's routine
 -Automobile-love episodes
 and gaming debts;
 -Then back to an afternoon of dreaming:
 "When I get you alone tonight"
 -Of desperate outwitting
 -Of both.
 "Where will you be at forty?"
 -Arguing students
 -Destroying the past
 -Denouncing the present
 -Despising the "mercenary"
 -All for black coffee
 and a future.
 "Own your own home!"
 -With a bedroom of lust
 -A kitchen of hate and destruction
 -Plush living rooms
 "A dollar down!"
 -Decrepit with cheap wit
 and the moment's wise-cracks;
 -Or
 -Abated with compromise
 until its customers
 go
 -Screaming made
 from silence enforced
 -Or suicide
 from despatched venom.
 The city swallows the sun
 Men hack God into bread.
 "FARM FOR SALE."
 -Farmer's help
 -And family and possessions
 -And second hand car

-Resist the road
 -Trek silently from state
 -To state
 -Envyng cattle their cud
 -And contentment
 -Only resting
 -For shepherd-food
 -And smuggled childbirth
 -Or to rant at the Combines
 -And the "Power"
 which conditioned them.
 "Farm For Sale."
 -In town
 -Farmers auction and barter
 -And families exchange toothpicks
 and hunger
 "When it's springtime in the Rockies"
 -Rivets of concern
 with the withering of crops
 -And unemployment
 -Animal lore
 -The political exploitation
 -And the same feudalism
 next Saturday.
 -Oil wells
 "Where oil has been
 little ever grows again"
 -Ranches and barren mines
 "A fertile region the prairies
 and an obstacle
 to white advance
 with no economy
 and only fit for Indians"
 -Billboards
 -For religion, mountains
 -And the holy word
 -Chalked by a strident bedouin
 -In a mouldy ford;
 "God is Love"
 "Jesus Saves"
 "You are now leaving the incorporated village
 of Eden"
 -All
 -The city, the country
 -All the hitch-hikers' kit
 -The discarded refuse
 for maintenance
 -And excursion
 -The billboards
 -The bourgeois scenery
 -The Highway
 -Aristocratic
 -And imperious
 -Impassive to the worker
 -And imperial!
 "Negro burned by mob"
 "Hunger-marches throughout U. S."
 "STRIKE!"
 The city swallows the sun
 Men hack God into bread.

THE PRODUCTION OF WORKING CLASS FILMS

Film production by workers' groups in a capitalist country is naturally beset with extreme difficulties. With the slender financial resources available to these groups a wide range of technical equipment is practically out of the question.

Does this mean that we should content ourselves with theorising over someone else's films until the revolution places the studios, the equipment and the money in our hands?

Obviously such a policy would make the workers' film groups a mere collection of critics, stifling the creative impulses that are to be found everywhere in our movement.

Whatever the difficulties, we must combine the sociological and technical study of the Soviet films with production work of our own, however crude and fragmentary it may be in the first stages.

We must learn to master, in a practical way, the elements of film production so that when we have the resources after the revolution we shall know how to make use of them.

Although the Workers' Film Movement in Britain is quite young, it has tackled this production problem and has already certain achievements to its credit.

What form of production is possible? I suggest that we can at least make a start with (1) workers' news reels; (2) montage films; (3) documentaries.

Here in Britain we have achieved something—a very little something—in these three forms. We have made three news reels, each about one thousand feet in length. The subjects covered by these reels include the May Day demonstrations, the International Day of Struggle against Unemployment, the strike of the Lancashire textile operatives, and the Unemployed Hunger March.

A single reel montage-film has been made under the title of *Glimpses of Modern Russia*. This entirely consists of cut-outs from Soviet films imported into Britain. The material was collected and fashioned into a rhythmical pattern. The result is a fairly compre-

hensive picture of various phases of life and activity in the Soviet Union today. The cost was negligible.

As a result of a Conference of delegates from the various Workers' Film Societies, a decision was made to produce a somewhat more ambitious effort. It was decided to popularise filmically the Workers' Charter, the militant programs of the revolutionary workers. An outline scenario was prepared and I was given responsibility for its production.

The film—*1931* is its title—has now been completed and was received enthusiastically at its first London presentation. *1931* shows how the dockers, the railwaymen, the miners, the textile and steel workers are exploited under the rationalisation attacks of the employers. The imperialist character of British capitalism is emphasised with shots of slave labour in China and the suppression of native revolts by troops and warships.

Shots of unemployed workers at the Labour Exchanges, and the slums where the workers live are contrasted with the luxury pursuits and wealth of the bourgeoisie.

The struggles of the colonial workers are cross-cut with those of the British workers and there is a symbolic sequence urging solidarity with the Soviet Union. Various shots of British workers in action, strikes, marches and demonstrations build up in a rising tempo to the fade-out title, a map of Britain, with the words "THEIR OWN" superimposed.

Difficulties of securing interior scenes of factory and workshop conditions necessitated the borrowing of certain sequences from other films, but a very considerable proportion of the film we shot ourselves with a portable hand camera. The film is entirely documentary; we employed no actors and no studio settings. It runs about 1,600 feet and costs under 50 pounds.

As an experiment, *1931* is valuable, not only for its propaganda content, but because it has taught us that workers' production is possible even with the most limited resources.

STEPHEN CLARKSON

LONDON CINEMA NOTES

The season of the London Workers' Film Society came to an end with a performance at which *The Blue Express* was shown. The society, which is the London branch of the Federation of Workers' Film Societies, began a new season in the fall.

The last programme was particularly notable. The first film was a Chaplin comedy and made interesting comparison with a film prepared by the London Worker's Film Society, called *Nineteen Thirty-One*, which

was the most ambitious effort of the Federation, as it represents an attempt in filmic form to popularize the Workers' Charter. It is documentary and a considerable portion was taken out of doors with only a hand camera. "The film endeavors, necessarily briefly, to emphasize the unemployment, poverty and exploitation of the workers in capitalist England and to show how the Charter is a weapon which the workers have forged in their economic and political struggles."

The brilliant cutting by Ralph Bond, who directed, has resulted in a documentary that is not only remarkable in its power of expression, but valuable as a historical document, and the pride of the members of the Federation.

The final item was the *Blue Express*, and after she had been driven victoriously over the frontier, one left the kino in a state of mind in which admiration for the technique and consideration of the idea were fighting for footage.

The *Blue Express* (sometimes known as *China Express*) is one of the finest examples of Russian technique that the writer has had the opportunity of seeing, and it is hoped that by the time this article is printed, Americans will have had the opportunity of seeing it. It is wonderful. The quick cutting to significant detail is used with more skill than ever before and the musical accompaniment by Edmund Meisel with mixed sound-effects produces an almost perfect harmony of sound and sight. It is the first Russian synchronized film and gives great insight into the almost unconsidered problems of visio-aural coordination. The programme aptly describes the film when

it says . . . "The social importance of the *Blue Express* is equalled by its superb artistic qualities. The technical resources of the director, his inspired symbolism, his profound sense of satire, his rhythmical cutting, his dialectical treatment of the social class-conflicts in China today, have contributed to making the *Blue Express* the most important work from Russian studios during 1930." And one may add that Ilya Trauberg, the director, takes his place with Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko, and Room.

There was an interesting repertory season at Stratford, an east London district, where the local censor has taken a sane attitude towards *The General Line*, *Turksib*, *Earth*, *The Ghost that Never Returns*, *Storm Over Asia*, *Men of the Woods*, *Giant Harvest*, and a series of interesting shorts, both new and old. *Earth* is the most recent Russian film to be shown here, but it is not possible to form any fair opinion, as the censor had been peculiarly ham-fisted with his ignorant shears. But the original treatment of an entirely new subject, or rather an old subject from a new approach, makes Dovzhenko as important in the Russian cinema as Ilya Trauberg.

VICTOR P. SMIRNOV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUND

In the Soviet Motion Picture Industry

The development of sound in the Soviet cinema took place in the latter months of 1930 and during 1931. Although Soviet cinematography was able to profit by the machine achievements of the United States (already a veteran in the sound film field), and by the achievements of the younger German sound film industry, nevertheless, it had to go through its own period of infancy and suffer all the ills of that period.

The first steps of the Soviet sound cinematography were timid. But the earlier experiments in sound in the United States and Germany helped the Soviet cinema in shortening this period of infancy, and greatly accelerated its progress.

In 1931 the sound film industry began to train people for the new medium; began to test and select the best Soviet recording systems, and to discover writers whose manuscripts were suitable for sound films.

There are three systems of recording in use in the Soviet Union now: the Shorin, the Tager, and the system devised by the engineers Othotnikov and Marshakovitch. Professor Chernyshev did valuable work with neon lamps, which should also be mentioned.

The fact that some of the best composers of our times—Deshevov, Shostakovitch, and Glier among them—have written for the new sound films, is especially noteworthy. The first two mentioned are internationally known.

Analysis of the production of 1931 shows that Soviet cinematography is fast acquiring experience and mechanical technique equal to that of the advanced nations. The appearance on the sound screens of Western Europe of such films as *Road To Life* with Shostako-

vitch, proves correct the Soviet policy of assimilating foreign experience and developing a Soviet industry of producing sound recording and sound reproducing equipment. The recording in these pictures is little, if at all, inferior in quality to European productions.

Among the important sound pictures to be released in 1931, is the film *Fear*, directed by Room. Its scenario was written by the talented young playwright, A. N. Afenogenov.

In 1931 the number of Soviet sound films, including the synchronized ones, was modest enough; thirty-two were made, of which twelve were features, the other twenty being educational. In 1932, Soyuzkino's schedule calls for a great increase. One hundred sound films will be produced; twenty-five of them features and the remaining of an educational nature. In 1931 there were only 50 sound screens; in 1932 the number of sound screens will reach three thousand.

In spite of the fact that the old motion picture studios of the Soviet Union are not well adapted to the production of sound films, this year will, no doubt, be utilized in filling the gap in sound film technique—the gap that resulted from the late entrance of Soviet cinematography into the sound field. 1932 will see the Soviet cinema brought back to its high standard of artistic quality, which was somewhat lowered during the last years, due to the reconstruction of the industry. This is assured by the enthusiastic response of the Union of Proletarian Writers and Composers to Soyuzkino's appeal to participate in the creation of a new and powerful branch of art that will be accessible to millions of people.

PARIS LETTER

Reasons for Suppressing a Film

G. W. Pabst, creator of one of the truest of war-films, *Four from the Infantry*, (*Comrades of 1918*), made a picture after that old English play of the 18th century: *Beggars' Opera*. And all the critics agreed in lauding its strength, its sincerity, and its tone, which was almost unheard of in the bourgeois cinema, a tone of revolt against poverty, of hope for a life without shackles.

This film is at present being shown in its entirety in Germany and in England, and with no small success. But it will not be seen in France. For the first time, the true reasons for suppressing this picture here have just been revealed and, as usual in such cases, the repulsive stench of police and business "plots" accompanies their announcement. The letter, written by the director of the prefectorial board of censorship to the company which was to release the picture in France, is definite and significant. The following deletions were demanded in this letter:

The delegate of the Prefecture of Police considered "indecent" the showing of a prostitute accosting a man on the street. No doubt, he wishes to see this only on the sidewalks of Paris.

Furthermore, he forbade the showing of a scene in which bribery is clearly established when the jailer tells Mackie Knife, leader of the bandits, that he has manacles at every price and, finally, releases his wrists in exchange for 50 pounds. This episode is considered topical because, recently, in a provincial prison, an inmate was freed through the corruption of several guards.

The delegate of the Ministry of the Interior considered the speech made by the beggars' chief, subversive and unwarranted. Under no conditions can talking pictures mention the hard hearts and sensitive nerves of the rich who are responsible for the misery of the poor (*sic*).

The Foreign Affairs delegate formally opposed showing a close-up of the Queen of England, livid with fear and hiding her face behind a bouquet of flowers as she beholds the beggars. The scenes of the beggars being brutally disbanded by the police did not have to be deleted. Naturally, in a bourgeois film, mass demonstrations can be shown only if participants are massacred and beaten by the "defenders of law and order." That is the safest policy.

The line would also have to be cut in which Mackie Knife states that an ex-police official will always make a good bank director, because there have been so many prefecture employees and even retired Prefects of Police who have become bank administrators.

In agreement with the firm's executives, Pabst refused to make these cuts which would have taken all meaning away from his film, and he invited the entire French Parliament to a private showing of *Beggars' Opera*. A goodly portion came. No one found any objections, but the ban was not raised.

A few days later, the distributing firm, Warner's French branch, was notified that the board of censors would give its visa to none of its films. M. Ginistry, dramatist and president of the board of censors, declared: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has requested that we systematically deny this firm our visa, by way of retaliation against one of its films, at present being shown on the screens of America, *Fifty Million Frenchmen*, a film definitely aimed against the good name of France."

This chastisement was revoked after a short time, but *Beggars' Opera* still was not permitted.

This is the situation in France. Therein lies a confession of failure. When, after sixty years of "democracy," the leaders of a country are reduced to emasculating a film, for fear that the masses might find in it some encouragement toward a supreme revolt, one can conclude that they are condemning their own creation and admitting that they are unable to retain governmental power in any manner other than police dictatorship.

Soviet Films in France

The treatment given Pabst's picture can give only a weak idea of the systematic manner in which Soviet films are boycotted in France. Still, through the relations of the French director, Abel Gance, at the Quai d'Orsay, it is possible that some of them may be authorized for public showing. In this way, *Along the Quiet Don*, made by Olga Preobrajenskaya, director of *The Women of Riazan*, has been shown at Studio 28, a small avant-garde house. But this is obviously not what might have been hoped for. Needless to say, the admirable Russian films are not meant for a few snobs and esthetes, but for wide, general audiences which might profitably come to know their lessons of beauty and culture. In that, too, France is considerably behind the other nations.

Elsewhere, despite an imperialism and a hatred of the Soviets in no wise inferior to those of the French bourgeoisie, such masterpieces as *Potemkin*, *Soil*, *October*, and others, the true classics of the screen, have been recognized and authorized for general release. In France, they are not even submitted to a board of censors whose answer is so certain beforehand. How can we forget that, after the "subversive" passages of Pudovkin's great film, *Mother*, were deleted, the film was only *one-half* of its original length?

According to late announcements, *Old and New*, heretofore suppressed, will be run at Studio 28, too. But here is another beautiful example of the hypocrisy of the stalwart guardians of our virtue: the film will not be shown under its real title, which has become too well-known. Instead, it will be authorized only if titled *The Struggle for the Land*.

"MUSTAPHA!"



"THE ROAD TO LIFE"
A SOVIET SOUND-FILM

Directed by Nikolai Ekk

Produced by Mezhrabpomfilm at
Studios of Leningrad, U. S. S. R.

Ayun e Madrid



“THE ROAD TO LIFE”



HOLLYWOOD AND MONTAGE

The Basic Fallacies of American Film Technique

In its long plundering career, Hollywood has debauched many beings and many things.

Among the things corrupted by Hollywood must be mentioned, first and foremost—the cinema. Under this term we may include such closely integrated factors as: film-technique, film-ideology, the whole conception and philosophy of the purposes, forms and structural problems of cinematography.

This new art was in a fair way to being analyzed and correctly exploited by Griffith many years ago, but the development of the big production-companies along opposite lines, their growth into a mammoth, octopus-like racket, and other coincident developments in the life of post-war capitalist America—the “racketeering” of the whole nation under the dictatorship of the biggest racket of them all, Big Business,—all this crushed, side-tracked, and otherwise defeated the first film-experimentalist, that is to say, the first creator that America had.

Added to these forces was the fact that Griffith himself, having no solid, well-planned ideology, either in the social or in the cinematic sense, was totally unable to resist their onslaught, and in more ways than one he relinquished the opportunity to preserve the important things he had started: he betrayed the American cinema.

Griffith came first; Hollywood—the “industry”—came afterward. We should be understood in a strictly materialistic sense when we say that Griffith was *spiritually* and *intellectually*, as well as economically, unequipped to combat the invasion of the barbarians and half-baked technicians who flooded Hollywood after him.

Nevertheless, without minimizing Griffith's tragic failings, it is doubtful whether in America, after the year 1921, any one man, and possibly any group of men, could have realized in practice what we understand today as “the modern cinema.” We must qualify this, of course, by saying that this would have been impossible *within* the industry itself. What could have been done *outside* the industry, with very humble financial means, but with a maximum application of effort and creativity,—this is a different story, and it merely reminds us again of how many of the bourgeois “film creators” of America, with their wealth and prestige, have been the basest traitors to the cinema. Their pride, consisting of their commercial aspirations, their high-flown social life, their impulse toward an existence of moral degeneracy and mental ease, plus other factors which we may discuss on another occasion, conflicted again and again with their sporadic attempts, sometimes strong, sometimes feeble, to aid the cinema.

Moreover, the wearisome, unequal struggle of such

men as F. W. Murnau, Robert Flaherty and Von Stroheim, against the stupidity, tyranny, ignorance and rattlesnake politics which characterize the Hollywood racket, definitely checked whatever constructive influence might have been forthcoming from the best of the intellectuals. In my opinion the defeat of the Swedish director, Victor Seastrom, was the most significant setback in this connection, unless we include the recent rejection of Eisenstein.

There have been opportunities of giving to the broad masses of the country the rudimentary practises and principles of a modern advanced cinema. If these opportunities had been taken advantage of independently (under private financing) since the days of Griffith's major creative work, the task for the proletarian cinema in America would be much easier today. There would not now be the gap between the extreme non-filmic construction of the Hollywood product on the one hand, and the realization of a dialectical montage-structure on the other.

But the crushing of first-rate men like Flaherty and Seastrom, who fought the barbarians in a fight lost from the start, was not in itself a basic cause. It was merely a dialectically inevitable result of an entire process of corruption and decay. The “fruits” of this process are manifest in the present wholesale disintegration.

Today the Hollywood bourgeois film speaks and screams aloud, but there is a death-rattle in the sound. A spurious form of film-technique, which has not been created suddenly but has evolved over a period of years, is used to keep the industry alive. Its mass of employees are destitute as never before, while even the few on top, who grabbed everything during the departed prosperity-epoch, are trembling on their thrones.

A rotting corpse, it relies on artificial respiration to keep going.

The decay of so vast an affair as the American screen can, of course, be traced to a considerable variety of fundamental causes. Most of these will be found in the history of capitalist economy in the United States and intimately associated with the social and political development of the American bourgeoisie as a class.

It should be noted that my interpretation of the cinema is based on my adherence to the principles of dialectic materialism. I have consistently attacked any point of view that seeks to explain the cinema as an isolated artistic phenomenon unrelated to such things as class-control of society, national economy, etc., in conditioning the minds of masses. And so, as regards the pitifully ineffective minority of talented technicians in Hollywood (directors, cameramen and writers),—I am not in the least overlooking the materialistic basis of

Hollywood's degeneration. Fundamentally, in the deepest dialectical sense, the basic causes of the stupidity, ignorance and tyranny of the American film-industry are indissolubly connected with the Marxian causal factors.

The whole mountain of celluloidal rubbish heaped up under the electric sign, "HOLLYWOOD," is a dialectical product, a crazy but inevitable monument, of the decayed culture of the American bourgeois class. No wonder, then, that in the final stage of capitalist society, when world capitalism has already begun its mad plunge downward, Hollywood's movies are eagerly sought by "tired business-men" to release them a moment from their sorrow!

The existence of an institution through a period of time need not signify progress; it may indicate retrogression. On one hand, the Soviet cinema in seven years has advanced to a condition of artistic conquest that no one had ever dreamed of, not even the venerable old Elie Faure in his *Art of Cineplastics*, nor such superficial, muddle-headed art-critics as Gilbert Seldes, whom we now perceive to have been captivated by the decadent *avant garde* cinema of France. On the other hand, there is the "film" developed by Hollywood. Degenerative impulses from the beginning; misunderstanding of the basic principles of film-form; relentless abuse and persecution of the small minority of useful and creative men involved (Seastrom, Flaherty, Stroheim, Dupont, Murnau); extension of false technique; growth and deliberate encouragement of technical creative methods (cutting, photography, direction and scenario-writing) that are essentially non-filmic and that have been obviously inspired by purely commercial exigencies during the industry's periodic panics.

The Hollywood technique of today is a mirage greatly admired by certain bourgeois film-producers and even by some of the "advanced" theorists of Europe, particularly of France. The French group, for example, freely admit the accidental, crazy technique of the American film, but they find in the product itself a certain mechanized good-natured *élan* that is missing in their own lives. It is therefore possible for them either to ignore the technique or to find in "accident" a source of virtue—never mind at the expense of how many thousands of Hollywood's wage-slaves who periodically pay the highest price for these directorial "accidents"!—and so they have propagated throughout Europe a hybrid-American conception of the cinema that is really quite attractive to many bourgeois esthetes. Happily, the mirage is even at this very moment beginning to grow dim on the horizon, and between the growing proletarian thunder at home and the death-rattle noise of the American talkie across the sea, the bourgeois esthetes of Western Europe who for some years have sung hymns of praise to the corruptive capitalist film from Hollywood, are finding that their chorus is already a trifle out of date.

In this paper I wish to trace and analyze the degeneration of American film-technique. In some ways it is wrong to speak of "degeneration," but if we take Griffith and certain isolated achievements after Griffith (for example: *Greed*, *Moana*, *The Wind*) as the

high marks of attainment on this side of the Atlantic, we shall be able to judge everything else accordingly. Of course, the moment we say "Griffith," we evoke instantaneously the more fundamental montage-system of the Soviet directors, who developed Griffith's elementary discoveries to their logical conclusion. But in this instance, for purposes of historical review and in order to obtain a proper perspective on the present film situation in America, we shall use only the more general and elementary principles of Soviet film-ideology as a means of comparison and definition.

FILM TECHNIQUE IN HOLLYWOOD

Today false methods of film technique obtain to a far greater degree in Hollywood, and are more desperately adhered to by the directors and "master" technicians of the American film-industry, than at any previous period. The essential reason for this is: *overcapitalization of the industry and the tyrannical use of power by the controlling interests have driven experimentation out of the studios or underground, and even the best directors, irrespective of what ingenuity they may possess, must conform to outworn and illogical conventions.*

The photography of the Hollywood product is in itself a summary expression of a false, romantic, bourgeois outlook on life and the American scene. But it is in *cutting*, in the editing-process, that we find the greatest source of Hollywood's corruption of film-technique. In this sphere, experimentation of even the most elementary nature—by experimentation we mean creative activity, the seeking of new expressive forms, the action of the artistic intellect—is denied to the makers of films. In its place stand certain *myths*, certain *falsehoods*, of film-construction.

Even if it were not for the low, moronic substance of Hollywood pictures, the predominance of these falsehoods, the conviction of the majority of the directors that these false methods are the correct methods of filmic construction, would alone absolutely forbid any intention of assigning a place to the Hollywood product among genuine film accomplishments.

Here, for example, is an incomplete "catechism" of the lies and illusions in which the Hollywood producers place their faith:

1. If a director has been "trained" in the cutting-department, he is *ipso-facto* a "wise" director and a "master" of montage. (This half-truth emanates from the well-known case of Milestone. I shall discuss the connection of Milestone with American cutting-methods later.)
2. When no other means of transition between the shots suggests itself, use a "lap dissolve."
3. The "lap dissolve" is useful at all times as a means of *smooth visual flow*. (In this error alone may be found the key to the technical degeneration of the American film.)
4. The function of film-photography is to please the eye. This function is valid regardless of the dramatic and montage requirements of the subject for harsh or otherwise "unpleasant" (subjectively speaking) photography. (From this we can see that the cameramen, whose art-tradition stems from sentimental and romantic still-photography, have more than a big share in the corruption of cinematography. Their bastard influence has spread throughout the world, infecting even the best of the European cinema.)
5. In the sound-film, the basis of each scene is the talk itself—the dialogue.

6. When it is desirable to "quicken" the audience's attention, use "fast cuts." (This doctrine is one of the most pernicious features of American film-technique at the present moment. It automatically destroys the whole conception of filmic unity and collective montage. (See *Street Scene*, *American Tragedy*, *Front Page*, etc.)
7. Use "interesting," "clever" and "startling" angles whenever possible to stimulate the audience and to call attention to the virtuosity of the cameraman.
8. The detail-closeup, the objectification-closeup and other closeups used for purposes of intensifying the montage-structure, except only when the faces of players are shown in closeup, have the function of, and are designated as, "inserts." They are not considered an intrinsic, vital unit of the montage-structure.
9. The background, especially if it is an outdoor scenic of the picture post-card variety, must always be photographed "pleasingly," "smoothly," (even if its purposes be "weirdness," "starkness," "coldness," etc.). The purpose should be to bring out the *photographic composition*. Never mind the cineplastic image-values! Never mind the overtone qualities, related to the montage-form as a collective whole! It is much more important that the photographer should show off that he knows "composition;" he will be sure to get a job on the next production. in that case.
10. *Excess footage*: this is the term used by the American producers to denote all the vital material that makes it possible to build up the structure of the continuity to points of high tension. By "excess footage" they mean any shot, or series of shots, whose connection with the material as a whole is not superficially obvious or literal, and whose function in the picture is purely filmic or subjective, instead of in the direct course of the action-narrative. Thus, they destroy the montage of their films by eliminating, or by not shooting at all, images that seem to be *incidental* to the upbuilding of atmosphere, mood, tone, etc., but that are actually of the greatest psychological importance. All this vital, significant image-stuff they call "*excess footage*." Examples later.
11. Closely connected with the above idiocy of American film-production is the ignorance concerning the use of "still" shots (pauses) or shots of arrested motion: e.g., objects, still-compositions, motionless images used for purely symbolical or cine-structural purposes. They do not know the value of the still shot, but consider it to be either "excess footage" or a "drag" on the tempo of the film. They imagine that any shot in which there is no motion is automatically "dead material." With this false idea firmly implanted in their "minds," the American producers prove conclusively that they know nothing whatever about the construction of tempo and rhythm in films.

As already stated, the foregoing fallacies and corrupt notions of film-technique (that is, what Hollywood calls "film-technique"), give only a partial, and by no means satisfactory, idea of the *mass* of stupidities in the name of which the American producers "construct" (read: destroy, murder) their films. But the above list, at any rate, indicates the calibre of the Hollywood film-mentality, and he who masters these obvious half-truths and contradictions is considered to have a "background" in "pictures" and is said in Hollywood to possess a "picture-mind."

To understand more fully the inimical character of these fraudulent concepts on which every film-production in Hollywood is based, and to realize how their *traditionalizing* has cheated the masses of movie-goers out of a rich esthetic experience, and incidentally effected a wholesale corruption of cinema in the Western world, it is necessary, first, to examine briefly the essential points of the most important theory of film-construction in the history of the art and, second, to analyze the salient construction-methods of Hollywood in the light of this theory.

MONTAGE

Nearly everyone today, even among the lay public, knows that after a film has been shot, it is assembled in the cutting-room where the individual shots or "takes"—closeups, long shots, medium shots, etc.—are pasted together in the order of their continuity or sequence thus forming one continuous strip of celluloid. This "continuity" (in reality, a succession of still-photographs), is formed, or *built up*, on the basis of the logical order of the time and space of its separate pieces.

This time and space, however, is filmic time and space, not real, or actual, time and space. The film, as we say, *has its own reality*. And the film has this autonomous filmic reality to the extent it departs from the norm of actual reality. As an example, consider the power of the film to *concentrate* its spatially separated scenes and also to *eliminate* transitional or intermediary steps in the projection of *filmic-time*.

In Griffith's *Intolerance*, to take an exceedingly impressive instance, four stories, each supposedly occurring in a different section of the world (Babylon, old Jerusalem, the France of the Huguenots and a modern American city), are flashed on the screen in a continuity of parallel and simultaneous action.¹

Another instance of the projection of filmic-time: the film may show a man entering a house, and in the very next shot, it may show the man leaving the house several hours or several years later, establishing the passage of time by inference, antecedent or subsequent, or by any device which has been calculated to be the logical one at this point of the film-structure. If the director's judgment fails to supply him with the logical image, he may resort to the standard expedient of unimaginative directors: a subtitle.

An important illustration of a method by which time can be "mounted," may be seen in the Ukrainian film, *Two Days*, made by a young Russian director, Stabavoj.

A bourgeois family is shown fleeing from a mansion.

Through the other end of town, the Red troops are advancing *en masse*.

After a violent succession of scenes of the fleeing family and the conquering army, Stabavoj causes the tempo of the film to lessen.

The action relaxes in its fury; movement diminishes in the individual shots; and, finally, a close-up is flashed showing the ornamented iron gate at the entrance to the family's home.

A hand places a Red flag on top of the gate.

The hand withdraws.

But the camera continues to focus on the gate and the Red flag.

¹ Technically considered, this citation from *Intolerance* is equally valid as an illustration of the power of time-concentration and time-montage, but I have quoted it here with reference to the treatment of *space*. However, it is more celebrated for the montage of time. Even the broad masses of people who have seen this tremendous film, without knowing a thing about film-technique, have marvelled at the violent parallelisms of the modern locomotive racing across the landscape and the massed chariots of Cyrus sweeping over the desert toward Babylon. The equal of this has not been achieved in the subsequent fifteen years of American cinema.

We are led to expect a change of shot, but, instead, we continue to gaze at this relatively motionless close-up of the Red flag.

Fully fifteen to twenty seconds (a long time in screen action) pass before anything happens. And then, imperceptibly at first, the Red flag dissolves slowly—almost sadly, it seems!—into the white flag of the counter-revolutionary armies!

In a single carefully developed dissolve, without a change of camera-placement and with no organic spatial motion, a lapse of time and a drastic reversal of situation are conveyed to the spectator.

These incidents have been cited as examples of *continuity*, of the possibilities and variations of *continuity-treatment*, but, as a matter of fact, they cannot be thought of, from a technical and esthetic point of view, in terms so simple and superficial. To define the methods of continuity utilized to weld the film into an artistic, structural whole, the Russians have taken from the French a word that in the last two years has created immense excitement and considerable anguish in the Western world, especially in Hollywood. I refer, of course, to the word "montage." As unfamiliar as this term is to many people in America in connection with the creative problems of the motion picture, it is a relatively simple matter to explain its meaning.

To mount a film means, broadly speaking, to *organize* it in a logical order of continuity. But it means more than this. The montage of a film implies certain definite ideas of cutting with respect to the internal relationship of its parts. For example: the proportioning of sequences on the basis of (1) the *number* of shots required to build up each sequence and (2) the *length* of each particular shot in relation to the length of every other shot. These two considerations lead directly to the establishment of *tempo*, *rhythm* and general *lines* or *tendencies* of movement.

The reward for the correct building-up, or montage, of tempo in a scene of great emotional power, or for the montage of a strong, irresistible rhythm in a sequence of mass-action and many conflicting currents of movement (as, for example, the massacre sequence in *Potemkin*) is the evocation of intense emotional response from the audience.

It would leave too serious a gap to omit one consideration of the montage-process that is more advanced and that is, perhaps, of even deeper significance.

Specifically: the montage of images which have no external, or subjective connection, but whose *objective* (meaning) connection is decisive. In such connections of images, regardless of the unifying process by Eisenstein's "conflict basis" of images, or by Kuleshov's early "brick-upon-brick" connection process, the elements of time and space do not enter into consideration. The following simple example from the opening

sequence of the Soviet film *In Old Siberia* (*Zuchthaus Nach Sibirien*) directed by Raismann, is important:²
Main Title:

1. Siberian sky.
2. Partial dissolve into aurora design on insignia of Greek Catholic Church. *This design gradually overspreads the entire sky and the sky finally dissolves out.*
3. Dissolve into composition-shot of a group of church buildings.
4. Dissolve into huge tower of Greek Catholic Church.
5. Dissolve into huge Christ figure.
6. Dissolve from Christ figure into group of prison buildings.
7. Dissolve into a different group of prison buildings.
8. DIRECT CUT to long-shot of a gloomy prison and a snow-waste in Siberia.
9. Perspective shot of a line of prisoners marching across the frozen waste, silhouetted against bleak Siberian sky.

There are very important conclusions to be drawn from the above continuity. For one thing, note that the lap dissolve is not used here as a slipshod connective of shots, having no filmically logical reason for its existence. But it is employed as a means of suggesting to the spectator the *objective* connection between the various elements (prisons, churches, facades, religious symbols.) The dissolve of one into another is an implied association which would be either lost or very unclear if direct cuts were used.

But, at the end of this group of shots (1-7), occurs a direct cut after a whole series of dissolves into the culmination-shot (the prison on the snow-plain) to which all preceding seven shots are related as a *collective unit*. And the prison itself is the main setting of the story.

This use of the dissolve is a radically different thing from the nonsensical use or rather, misuse, of dissolves in pictures of Hollywood, where we see one room "melting" into another, or a man walking from one room to the next in a "lap dissolve" for which there is no logical filmic reason except that the director and the cutter did not know how to build the continuity.³

Another important observation to be made from Raismann's continuity is the minimum time-element and space-element involved in the transition from one image to the next. These elements are present, but only in the broadest sense. We know that it is Siberia, that it is in the time of the Czar, that there is a significant connection between Greek Catholic Church and Czarist

² This is one of the least important of the Soviet films, but one which nicely suits our purpose of analyzing an elementary example. We need not go to Eisenstein or to Dovzhenko at this stage of analysis, since the construction of "non-match" images in their films is undertaken on an entirely different theoretical basis—that of purely overtone and intellectual-symbolical imagery along lines of "conflict" and "synthesis" respectively. Raismann is one of the youngsters among Soviet producers, and we could even choose examples from Kuleshov, the pioneer of Russian directors, whom Eisenstein has termed "theoretically quite antiquated." We do not need to travel to the farthest terminal of the left cinema-line in order to provide examples that, by contrast, show how backward Hollywood really is.

³ The most conspicuous misuse of the lap dissolve occurs incessantly in the pictures of one of the worst American directors: Josef "von" Sternberg. It would make too long a digression to relate all that this man does not know about film-construction and direction, but his recourse to endless series of dissolves gives us a cue to the basis of his perverse idea of the cinema. In one of his recent pictures, *Dishonored*, he used so many dissolves that the film became optically tiresome, entirely apart from the poor direction, etc. One shot melted into another, and this process was kept up relentlessly, without stop, until the picture was a confusion of mixing, dissolving, inter-melting scenes and it was sometimes difficult to determine which was which. This, of course, was an extreme misuse of a false method which even the better-informed directors use in all their films.

prison. The atmosphere of gloom, oppression, tyranny, dominance of the church, etc., is very strongly conveyed. And as concerns the symbolical value of the images (the church insignia, the Christ figure, etc.) after seeing this picture, I made the following note, which I have incorporated in my essay, *Principles of the New World-Cinema*:

"To operate as a symbol in an explicit symbol-relationship, an image need not be temporally (film-chronologically) or spatially (film-geographically) connected with other images that precede or follow it . . . This *summation* montage, which opens the film, consists of elements (prisons, churches, facades, religious symbols, etc.) which have no geographical connection with each other or with the action projected, but which are coordinated as essential elements in the *explicit* symbol-relationship formulating the association of church and prison (*oppression in old Siberia*)."

And I added that, with almost the solitary exception of Griffith (in his earlier days), this is a phase of the montage of symbols entirely unknown to American picture-makers.

From these few simple examples we can realize: (1) the significance of montage as the one unifying factor in filmization and (2) the importance of montage-ideology as a method of dialectical analysis of film-construction. (Cine-analysis.)

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to mention that the examples we have offered hardly begin to give an idea of the vast and rich attainments of the Soviet cinema to date in the creation of new, significant montage-forms.

According to Pudovkin,

montage is "the logic," "the structural principle of film-language"—Film Grammar.

According to Eisenstein,

montage is the mathematics of film-construction, the dialectical principles governing the dynamics of film-form—Film Dialectic.

And both Eisenstein and Pudovkin have emphasized, again and again, that montage does not mean, and is not of necessity intrinsically identified with, quick, shortly-cut flashes of scenes pieced together in rapid succession. In their films as well as in theoretical evaluations, they have shown it to be the *forming* principle that conditions and governs the final unity of the film, investing the whole structure of the picture with the logic of image-associations that the multiplicity of montage-devices makes possible.

Obviously, when viewed in this light, the film assumes the seriousness and complexity of formal method associated with any other major form of expression, and it becomes, even more than music, something to be scientifically studied.

Systematic study of the cinema is a procedure entirely unknown to the chaos-minded movie directors and cameramen of Hollywood. But in the U.S.S.R., a film-university (the Moscow Kino Technikum) has been established for the purpose of thorough study and research of the motion-picture.

A point even more important in this connection, however, is the relation between montage and cutting. Several of the most prominent Soviet directors have valiantly endeavored, in their technical writings on the subject, to make it clear to the Western world that montage does not *mean* cutting, although

manifestly it *cannot be achieved without resort to the physical operation of cutting*.

Up to a few years ago, the American directors used to pride themselves on their ability to edit (mount) their films in a way that compelled the attention of the audience. We may expose this fallacy in passing. Generally, the stupidity of American directors, a stupidity beyond description, was covered up by the clever work of an obscure cutter who had a better sense of the filmic structure than the director and who was, therefore, permitted to earn \$25.00 a week for his knowledge as against hundreds of dollars or more per week that the director got for his ignorance.

Moreover, the excessively limited knowledge of the cutters themselves—remarkable beside that of the directors, but pathetic beside that of the Soviet technicians—never really entitled the American movie-crowd to toot their horns so loudly about their editing abilities. They understood *editing*, i.e., a certain ingenious assembling of the shots to make the picture "flow smoothly." And they knew it better than the Germans or the Swedes, and better than the French commercial directors. *Montage*, however, the revolutionary creative extension of the editing-process, they have never known as a group and known but superficially in single cases.

It was characteristically brazen of the shyster-directors of Hollywood to pretend that they had attained the "highest mastery" of the cinema of any group on earth, but this sophism has been sufficiently punctured by superior Soviet accomplishments. What has not been sufficiently emphasized is the fact that whatever artistic accomplishments the American film can show during at least the first ten years of its existence, especially by way of *montage*, are either the achievements, or the imitation of the achievements, of one man. And we have already seen that Griffith, even though he towered far above anyone else in the epoch dominated by his name, failed basically. But Griffith at his best distinctly knew how to "cut"—indeed, how to *mount*—along at least metrical lines, and sometimes in a startling way prophetic of Eisenstein's overtones. (*Broken Blossoms*.)

Even in his two-reeler, *The Massacre*, produced in 1910, five years before *The Birth of a Nation*, Griffith created a rotation of sharply conflicting long shots and closeups, in the climax, which could not be questioned from the standpoint of simple metrics (length of the images, progressive acceleration of tempo, etc.) This was "cutting" with a vengeance! In fact, it was *montage*, and every American director and cutter means precisely this when he talks—so superficially, so stupidly—about knowing how to "cut" a film. But the American crowd since Griffith, with the same accidental exceptions as heretofore noted (mostly drifting in from other countries where Griffith's pictures were *studied*), knows nothing *beyond* this elementary A-B-C metrical conception of film-montage. And the ignorance today is greater than ever, for the talking film has caught the Hollywood crowd intellectually unprepared to meet its far more complex—and more problematic—demands, so that even those wise, wise "experienced" directors, the long-term job-holders from the silent era, give ever-increasing evidence of their inability to handle the themes they are confronted with.

To complete this picture of Hollywood's senile decay, we have only to look at one classical example from the continuity of a Soviet film to perceive how, even in the field of *elementary metrical cutting*, the Hollywood movie directors have failed to master, in any sense of the word, the medium which they have so viciously degraded. This section of a sequence in Dovzhenko's *Arsenal* will enable us to decide conclusively whether in Hollywood they have a right even to mention the word "montage":

- 749 Interior of an empty room. The Bolshevik and the Menshevik face each other at some distance.
 - 750-761 A series of constantly enlarging closeups of the two opponents.
 - 762 The Menshevik points his revolver.
 - 763 Street fighting outside.
 - 764 The Menshevik points... aims.
 - 765 The street. Bolsheviks gaining.
 - 766 The little Bolshevik walks over to the wall. He stands with his face to it. Waits. Suddenly he turns...
 - 767 Bolshevik troops racing over the snow. At furious speed. City-ward.
 - 768 The little Bolshevik advances to the center of the room, squarely facing his opponent.
 - 769 Red troops rounding a bend in the road. Toward the city.
 - 770 The Menshevik takes aim.
 - 771 Bolshevik soldiers on the run.
 - 772 Red troops gaining.
 - 773 Totality shot of city street (from high angle above). Terrible confusion. Red troops pressing ahead.
 - 774 Totality shot interior room. (Taken from above). The Bolshevik and the Menshevik face to face. The Menshevik trembles as he points his gun at the Bolshevik.
 - 775 Closeup of Menshevik's hand (three-quarter range). Bolshevik enters picture-frame from opposite side of cadre.
 - 776 Closeup Menshevik.
 - 777 Closeup Bolshevik.
 - (The Bolshevik) "Can't you do it looking in my eyes?"
 - 778 Closeup Bolshevik. (Cut-back 777).
 - 779 Closeup Menshevik, frightened.
 - 780 Closeup Bolshevik, fierce.
 - Title:* (The Bolshevik) "I can."
 - 781 Closeup revolver in Menshevik's hand. The Bolshevik suddenly seizes the revolver by the muzzle.
 - 782 Closeup Menshevik. His right forefinger is still crooked as if it were still pressing the pistol-trigger. It makes a reflex-movement, pulling an imaginary trigger in space. It repeats the motion a few times while the Menshevik stares, blankly.
 - 783 Closeup Bolshevik. He raises the pistol and levels it at the Menshevik.
 - *784 Closeup Menshevik. He gulps. 27 frames.
 - **785 A pile of exploded, smoking shells. 36 frames.
 - *786 Totality shot of room, taken from above. The Menshevik lies dead on the floor. The Bolshevik stands over him with smoking pistol. No movement. Smoke fades off.... 113 frames, including a 21-frame fade-out.
- In another article I characterized this as a "fiery, Heraclitean continuity," emphasizing the "intoxicating interplay of conflicting elements (collision of shots, collision of angles, collision of tempos, collision of

sizes, collision of movement-forms, etc.) culminating in the image of shells *already exploded*"... "development of actions and lines of movement unified in a single synthetic impulse"... actions "converging in one impulse toward the climax-image of the whole unit (**785)".... "a dialectical solution of movement-progressions."

And it is needless to point out the clarity of Dovzhenko's image-structure, its compelling force, its simplicity of motion-line.

Needless, too, to mention that the Soviet cinema offers an astonishingly large number of similar instances which, even in the most elemental spheres of construction, beat Hollywood at its own game.

As a matter of fact, montage, that is to say, the whole point and essence of the motion picture—is a stranger that can hardly be said to have been won over by Hollywood's gold.

There remains only one point to complete our outline of the conception of the cinema that prevails in the Soviet Union. The Russian directors do not "cut" their films. They do not "break up" their scenes, to use the stock-in-trade Hollywood expression.

They regard the cutting-process rather as an *assembling-process*, and the division of the master scenes into long shots, closeups, etc., not really as a division, but as a *geometric building-up* and unification of vital elements inherent in the scene, and they emphatically, and with irrefutable logic, maintain that this assembling-process and this building-up is *the logical continuation of the director's function after he leaves the set where the scene was photographed*.

Having already begun to create a reality (film-reality) on the set and on the field, they ask why should the director now abandon his half-formed microcosm, the film, at this vital point, where the multitudinous fragments of his creation require to be organized and coordinated in their delicate, complex relationships of time and space and psychological associations?

So much for the general aspects of the theory and conception of cinema which the Russians have evolved. I have merely sketched it, regretfully forcing myself to omit its deeper aspects, its various radical, left-wing schools (Vertov, Eisenstein, Kaufman, etc.) and its profound and startling contributions to the physiological theory of esthetics and emotion.

In the next issue of *Experimental Cinema* I shall present in review the standard methods, traditions and "ideas" of the American bourgeois cinema and see how they measure up to the system of *montage-logic* that has just been discussed.

Hollywood: Sales Agent of American Imperialism

Continued from page 20

patriots of 1868,—the majority of them were slave-owners,—was to declare their Negroes free. So, in both wars of independence, 1868 to 1878 and 1895 to 1898, Negroes and whites fought for liberty, shoulder to shoulder, against the tyranny of Spain, their secular enemy.

So we do not have that terrific racial antagonism.

But things are changing, owing to the Hollywood pictures and to the Cuban youth in America. In American films, Negroes are cowards, superstitious, dumb or at least a ridiculous entity, nothing but serfs. There is not a single shot of Negroes like Langston Hughes' workers and students, who after a brilliant graduation from some university cannot get anything but a job in

a Pullman, shining the shoes of the great "senores," the bosses, or cleaning spittoons.

This depiction of their race has evidently affected the Negroes' confidence in themselves, handicapping them in the effort to dominate their *taras*. I expect and hope that the Cuban Negro leaders will advise their brothers everywhere to boycott the American pictures.

The white Cuban has always appreciated the Negro as a human being, having the same right to happiness and consideration as himself. The Cuban Negro has a powerful imagination, a fine sensitiveness, and he is a quick and clever thinker. His individual and class development is astonishing. In the public school, in the Provincial Institutes,—there are six of these, one in every Province, and they are equivalent to high schools in the U.S.A.,—as well as in the National University,* the Negro students often get the highest honors and are the best exponents of learning and are deeply esteemed and admired by their white comrades.

What is the attitude of the Cuban critics and intellectuals toward Hollywood films?

Petit bourgeoisie as they are, the Cuban critics and intellectuals are deeply interested in idealistic philosophical schools and other hocus-pocus, most of them suffering from an irremediable spiritual and mental psychosis, being diseased with a rotten social politico-economic conception. They praised such pictures as *The Smiling Lieutenant*, *Strangers May Kiss*, *Anna Christie*, etc., and they either let pass *Storm Over Asia*, *The New Babylon* and *The End of St. Petersburg* without any comment or they charged them with the accusation of "propaganda," as if every art in the world has been anything else but a vehicle to carry on and extend the idea or the message of its author, i.e., propaganda.

Very few of the Cuban critics and intellectuals have seen *Potemkin* or the old American films, like *Way Down East* or *Broken Blossoms*, for instance. They have been interested in the films only for the past five or six years, when European literati began to make so much noise about the new art, "Chaplin the genius," etc., and I do not believe they know anything either about cutting or montage, ignoring the fact that these are the backbone, the very nerve, of cinema art. I do not hesitate in affirming that not one of our esthetes, art critics and intellectuals has heard of Eisenstein's theories of cinematic arts, based on dialectic materialism, the philosophy so deeply hated by them all.

They do not realize that the cinema is in its inner essence dialectic and revolutionary, nor are they aware of Hollywood's terrible miscomprehension of the most authentic values of the cinema, as is evident in its everyday use—I better say *mis-use*—of montage and sound. They have accepted the talkies in the Hollywood way, and those pictures, mere copies or photographs of theatrical pieces—operettas, musical come-

dies, dramas, melodramas—are nothing but manifestations of demodé artistic forms and concepts.

I have said before that the American film is furiously individualistic. It is based on unbridled egotism. But what else is the capitalist system if not a hymn of glorification of the individual, at least concerning matters of appropriation and exploitation? One of the principal differences between the American and the Soviet films is this: the former looks back to the past, trying to perpetuate and maintain it; the latter, with a profound social significance, looks to the future.

To sum up: Every film made in the U.S.A.,—and the U.S.A. is the very essence of capitalism in its final stage,—contains an implicit attack on the proletariat and on those countries that are rich in prime raw materials and in economic possibilities, which the imperialist robbers are seeking. I have never seen projected in an American film the fundamental inequality between bourgeoisie and proletariat.

According to Marx, the arts are based on the economic structure. Nikolai Bukharin in his important work, *Historical Materialism, A System of Sociology*, Chapt. IV, p. 196, says: "Directly or indirectly, art is ultimately determined in various ways by the economic structure and by the stage of development of the social technology."

So, the cinema must express the real sentiments and thoughts of this historical moment, and, being revolutionary, it must work for the destruction of the present social forms. Then it will be in accord with that dialectic and revolutionary essence which I mentioned before. This is what happens in the case of the Soviet films, but not so with the Hollywood pictures, which are fetters, holding up and impeding the development of the new art. There is a sharp contradiction between the purposes for which American Capital is using the cinema and the cinema's inner and authentic essence.

Every class in its dominating period has developed an art of a particular mood or school of art, reinforcing its domination through that art. So the proletariat will develop the cinema and make it fulfill its maximum possibilities.

Controlled by the bourgeoisie for its own benefit and used against the exploited, very soon the cinema will turn itself,—for dialectical reasons,—against the bourgeoisie, helping the proletariat in its inevitable historical rise to power and contributing to put an end to what Karl Marx called "the closing chapter of the prehistoric stage of human society."

—La Habana, Cuba.

* All the Provincial Institutes and the National University the latter founded in 1728, have been closed and suppressed, from September 30, 1930 to the present, by Machado's government because the students bitterly protested against the brutal regime and against American imperialism. Machado, like practically every president of Cuba, is an agent of American imperialism.

HOLLYWOOD BULLETIN

THREE YEARS OF SOVIET FILMS IN HOLLYWOOD

It is now the end of the third year that the films of the Soviet Union have been shown in Hollywood. In little more than three years' time, twenty-nine Soviet pictures, including one made in Germany by a Soviet director, have appeared on the screens of the American film-capital.

The first ones to be shown were *Potemkin* and Taritsch's old film, *Czar Ivan the Terrible*. Both these productions were released almost simultaneously in the winter of 1929. *Potemkin*, according to a report, had been privately shown to members of the American film-industry in 1928, but its first public exhibition in Southern California that we have record of, took place in the following year. *Ivan the Terrible* was not so successful as *Potemkin*, but it obviously made a deep impression on those who saw it, for its influence was detectable in a certain Hollywood production shortly afterwards.

After *Potemkin* had been displayed in any number of theatres in and around Los Angeles and Hollywood, came a long stretch when no one heard anything further about Soviet films. But soon rumors began to come across the country from New York, and friends of Russia heard or read stories of the sensational New York receptions accorded such pictures as *End of St. Petersburg*, *Ten Days That Shook the World* and several others.

Pudovkin's powerful film of the Russian Revolution, *The End of St. Petersburg*, was shown in 1929 at a Fox theatre in San Francisco. According to reports, it was received with great enthusiasm and was therefore quickly withdrawn. In the interests, no doubt, of "giving the public what it wants"!

Later that same year, the Filmarte Theatre in Hollywood was renovated and opened under new management. In the beginning this management was content to show revivals of classic American pictures and it succeeded in obtaining prints of such rare pictures as *Intolerance*, *Birth of a Nation*, *Broken Blossoms*, etc., (but, unfortunately, not of *Greed*). Shortly thereafter, someone informed the managers about the Russian films, requesting them to communicate with the Amkino Corporation in New York. Other requests, based on rumors and reports that had reached Hollywood, were brought to the attention of the Filmarte people. The latter opened negotiations with New York, and before long it became the habit of a large group of people in Hollywood to look forward to that sanctified Friday night on which a new one of those strange, startling and generally overpowering Bolshevik films would be shown, with Amkino's trade-mark of the sun rising over the earth as a significant forerunner to the images themselves!

Here is a complete list of the Russian

films shown to date at this theatre, in the order of their exhibition:

1929

POTEMKIN
THE VILLAGE OF SIN
(*Das Dorf der Sünde*)
TWO DAYS
HER WAY OF LOVE
(*Das Weib des Gardisten*)
TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE
WORLD (OCTOBER)

1930

IN OLD SIBERIA
(*Zuchthaus Nach Sibirien*)
ARSENAL
FLAMES ON THE VOLGA
(*Revolt in Kawan*)
THE YELLOW PASS
(*Der Gelbe Pass*)
THE NEW BABYLON
(*Kampf Um Paris*)
OLD AND NEW (THE GENERAL
LINE) (*Der Kampf um die Erde*)
PAMIR (*Expeditionary Film*)
A FRAGMENT OF AN EMPIRE
TURK-SIB
CHINA EXPRESS (THE BLUE
EXPRESS)
LASH OF THE CZAR

1931

SOIL (EARTH)
STORM OVER ASIA
IGDENBU
CITIES AND YEARS
TRANSPORT OF FIRE
AL YEMEN
CAIN AND ARTEM
STORM OVER ASIA (*revival*)
A SON OF THE LAND
THE FIVE YEAR PLAN

1932

A JEW AT WAR
THE ROAD TO LIFE

In addition to the foregoing, *The Brothers Karamazov*, directed in Germany by Ozep (who made *The Yellow Pass*), was recently shown at the California Theatre in Los Angeles and is to be brought to the Filmarte in Hollywood sometime next season.

Thus, twenty-nine Soviet films in all, of which one, *Storm Over Asia*, was run a second time less than six months after its initial showing, have come to Hollywood.

The directors whose work has been represented in this collection of films are: Eisenstein, Dovzhenko, Pudovkin, Ilya Trauberg, Kozinstov, L. Trauberg, Ozep, Victor Turin, Raismann, Ermler, Taritsch, Stabavoj, Preobrazhenskaja, Ekk, and others.

It is a good list, from one point of view—namely, its variety and volume. But on the other hand, it is quite incomplete. The Soviet Cinema is a fertile and productive field of artistic labor. The number of its preeminent films exceeds that of all other nations taken together.

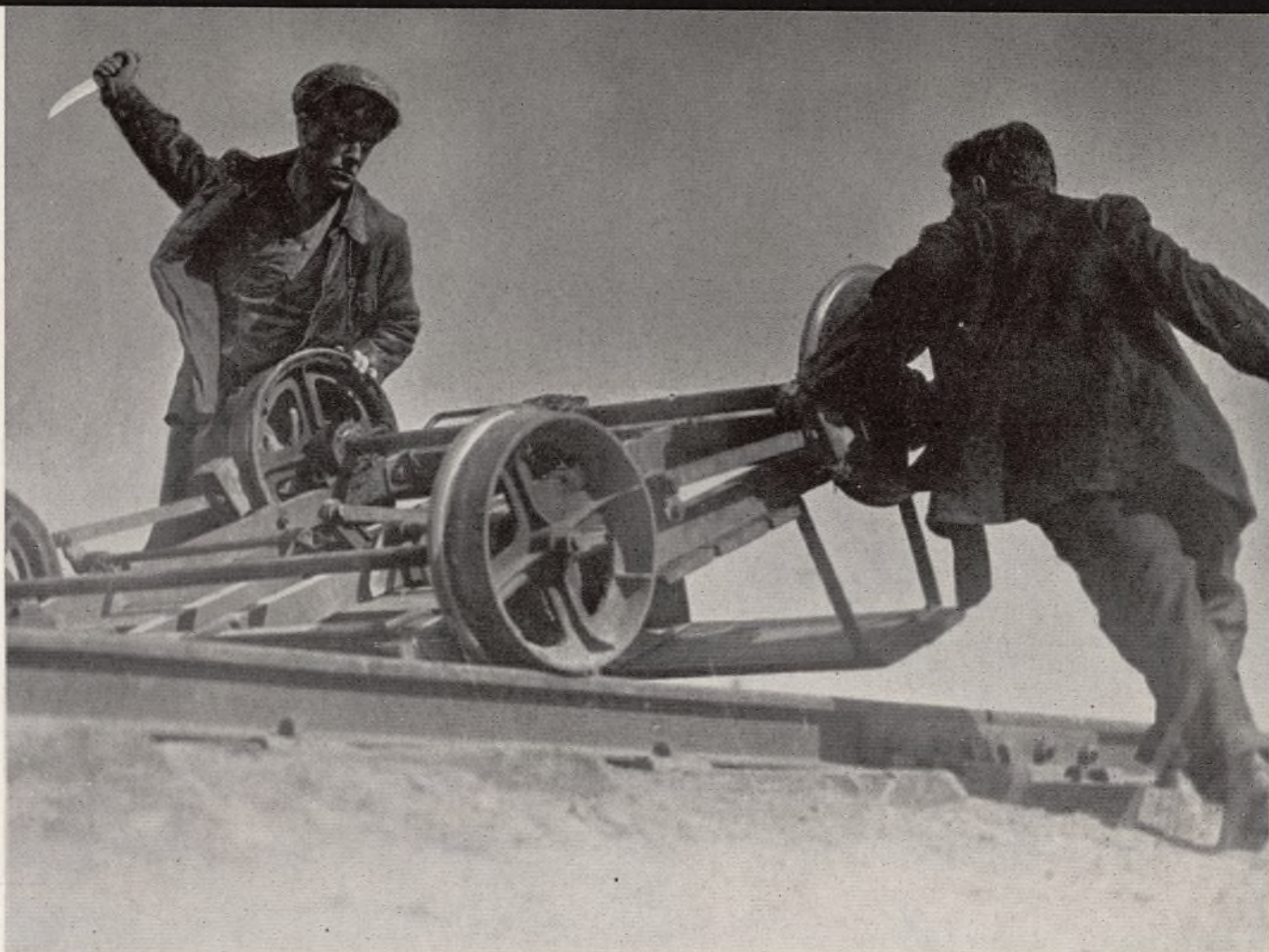
And we have not yet seen the films of Dziga Vertov, Alexander Room, Esther Schub, M. Kaufmann, Lev Kuleshov, or the LEFT-group of Lenin-grad. Very important productions from the USSR must therefore yet be shown here. Among others: Room's two famous pictures, *Bed and Sofa* and *The Ghost That Never Returns*; Vertov's *Enthusiasm* and *The Man With the Movie Camera*; Kuleshov's filmization of a Jack London story (titled, *Expiation*); Kaufmann's recent picture, *Spring*; and *Alone* (Kozinstov's and Trauberg's new production).

Besides these, the Filmarte Theatre still has the task of trying to secure a print of *The End of St. Petersburg*. The managers of this theatre have made repeated attempts to obtain this colossal picture, but for various reasons all efforts have so far been unsuccessful. One reason is that the picture has been involved in a great deal of litigation in New York, having been withheld from public showing in the past year by Arthur Hammerstein, who bought the American rights to it in Germany.

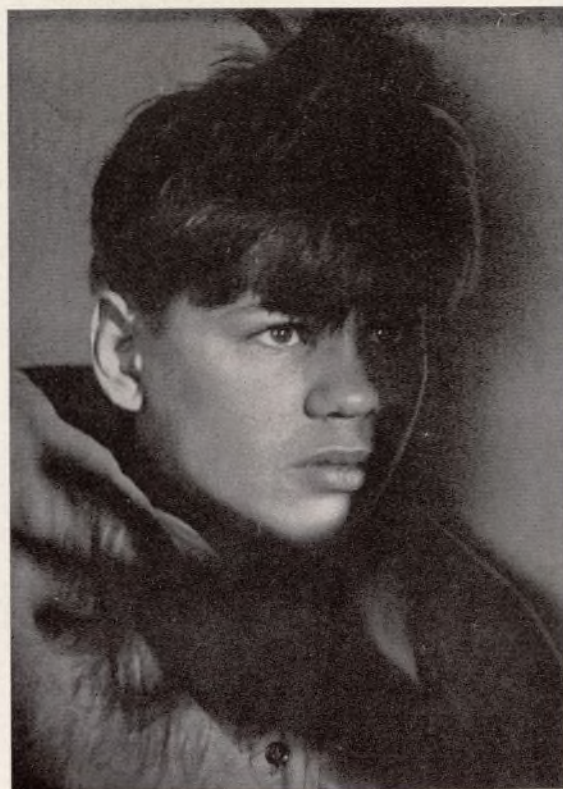
Hammerstein returned to the United States not having the slightest idea of how to "put over" a film of this type. *St. Petersburg* opened at the Hammerstein Theatre on Broadway on an all-day-run (continuous show) policy. This was a mistake from the start, since the nature of the picture urgently required that it be seen by the audience from the beginning to the end, in sequence, and therefore on definite schedule. The next mistake was the advertising, which was altogether hopeless. The third mistake was the musical score for which Hammerstein hired a complete film-orchestra. This score was utterly out of spirit with the picture, the leader of the orchestra having decided that it would be all right to play the *Song of the Flame* (from one of Hammerstein's operettas) as a theme-piece. And to crown all these tragedies was the circumstance of the geographical location of the Hammerstein Theatre on upper Broadway, somewhat beyond the main theatrical district of New York.

So *The End of St. Petersburg*, because of these and other factors, not the least important of which was the butchery committed by a Federal censor sent up from Washington, D.C., especially for this job, was not the sweeping success in the East that it would have been if more favorable conditions had prevailed. While in Berlin this picture became the rage for two solid seasons, in New York its success was less marked because of the above-mentioned reasons. The result was that Hammerstein lost money on it, and he seemed unable to make up his mind whether or not to road-show it. Amkino then tried to buy the print back. Between Hammerstein's vacillations and the dickering of Amkino, *The End of St. Petersburg* retired modestly into seclusion!

Yet, in spite of this, it ran at the Roxy Theatre, the largest house in New York, where it was held over a second week. In Detroit it ran three weeks at a large Fox house. In other cities its success was proportionate. But after three years we have not yet had the opportunity of witnessing how Hollywood will take to this gigantic film.



‘ ‘ T H E R O A D T O L I F E ’ ’





A "candid camera close-up" of a scene at the banquet of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (of Hollywood, Cal.,) on November 11, 1931. The "candid camera," which "pictures natural character studies of its subjects while they are unaware of its presence," here shows Vice-President (of the U.S.A.) Charles E. Curtis (at right) in a pleasant little chat with his sister, Mrs. Dolly Gann (at left). For those especially interested in the study of "motion picture arts and sciences," it will undoubtedly be valuable information to know that Mrs. Gann wore "a white chiffon gown, exquisitely appliqued with white taffeta medallions embroidered with gold thread. And real orchids." Photo courtesy Los Angeles Evening Herald.



"candid camera
a scene at the cele-
brated banquet.
is "Czar" Will
crowned emperor of
the industry, in the
an interesting speech
progress" of Ameri-
les, while the gentle-
ly asleep (second
) is none other than
Curtis, Vice-President
S.A. The first figure
with face upturned
the speaker, is James
Governor of the State
Virginia, sometimes re-
as "Sunny Jim" (N.
his wonderful smile).
of the Vice-President
B. Mayer, erstwhile
for to Turkey-to-be,
the Mogul of M-G-M.
him is Mrs. Dolly
the Vice-President's
er eyes devoted to
days. Photo courtesy
the Evening Herald.



Ayuntamiento de Madrid

Interesting in this connection is the fact that Pudovkin's other picture, *Storm Over Asia*, proved to be the most popular of all the Russian films shown in Hollywood. It played for two weeks at the Filmarte, packing the house with crowds that received it with enthusiastic applause. This was especially significant in view of the antagonism toward the yellow race that the fruit-capitalists of Southern California have tried to foster among the population of this section.

The fame of *Storm Over Asia* spread throughout the northern district of Southern California, and people came to see it from towns twenty, thirty and fifty miles away,—from Long Beach, Santa Ana, Laguna, Riverside and even from Santa Barbara, ninety miles up the coast. In consequence, it was brought back to the Filmarte six months later for a second run.

The majority of the other Soviet films shown in Hollywood were also very popular. The outstanding successes among these were: *Potemkin*, *Old and New*, *Ten Days That Shook the World*, *A Fragment of an Empire*—extremely successful—*China Express*, *Turk-Sib*, *Her Way of Love*, *Old Siberia*, *The Road to Life*, and *The Five Year Plan*.

As these films continued to be shown, one after another, increasing groups of new people came to see them, while the audiences who had followed them from the beginning came to expect higher standards and more finished results. Such results were not always forthcoming due to the fact that the order in which the Russian films were shown in Hollywood was not coincident with the order in which they had been produced in the US SR. Therefore, it often happened that after an exceptionally wonderful film was shown, a poorer one, which had been produced several years earlier, followed it up. And a number of these poorer pictures were decided failures, both artistically and commercially. Such as: *The Lash of the Quar*, *Cities and Years* and *A Son of the Land*. But there is no doubt that if they had been released three years ago, before *Ten Days*, *Arsenal* and other pictures of a high standard, they would not have been such commercial failures. In this respect, it is interesting to note that *Cain and Artem*, *Al Yemen*, and *Igdenbu*, three pictures of minor significance, were quite popular at the Filmarte, but were very disappointing to the studio-people and intellectuals.

(For details concerning the exhibition and reception of the other Soviet films shown in Hollywood during the past two years, see the *Hollywood Bulletin* in "Experimental Cinema," Nos. 2 and 3.)

THE ACADEMY AND THE CAMERAMEN

The organization which styles itself the "Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences" of Hollywood (1) had a rather hectic time of it in its assignment of awards on Nov. 10. It awarded the various prizes for the year's "artistic" achievements (sic), amid a terrifying gush of ballyhoo and vulgar publicity, the hub of which was the dozing schnozzle of Vice-President (of the U. S. A.) Charlie Curtis. The dinner at which this august personage somnambulistically presided over the Academy's august events need

not be described: only a film (in the manner of Pudovkin's patriotic parade in *The End of St. Petersburg* could convey an idea of its stu-pen-dous cultural importance. On the opposite page you may get a feeble idea of what this beatific banquet was like.

The awards made by the Academy raised a storm. Although few people in Hollywood took the whole circus seriously, the cameramen were aroused. They were incensed over the Academy's selection of the photography of *Tabu* as the "best photographic work" of the year. Their protestations were based on solid reasoning.

Tabu, they claimed, was not a regular studio-made picture. It was produced entirely independent of studio-supervision, and it took approximately two years to complete. Furthermore, they objected, it is easy to shoot a film in the South Sea Islands, where climate, quality of atmosphere and many other material and natural conditions are overwhelmingly in your favor. This is quite a different thing from shooting pictures in a dull, flat-toned real-estate bedlam like Hollywood.

Up to this point the arguments of the cameramen, so wrathful at not having been considered for the coveted Academy "honor," were logical beyond dispute. But there was another angle to their objections, an angle which reveals some illuminating features of the peculiar psychology of the American movie-crowd. These precious photographic geniuses of the Hollywood film-industry were all "hot and bothered" because the photographer of *Tabu*, so they maintained, was not a "recognized" photographer.

Exactly what does this mean? What do they mean when they speak of a photographer being "recognized" or "unrecognized"? Who does the recognizing? By whose standards and by whose law is an "outcast" photographer "not recognized"?

The answer, in our opinion, is quite simple and can be expressed without any technical red tape. A movie photographer is "recognized" in Hollywood when he is socially and economically a member of the cameramen's clique; when he is a member of the cameramen's union (virtually a social club), when he is "one of the boys," as they say; when he plays a good game of poker with his fellow-cameramen, or otherwise "gets in the swim" of their social activities.

Being a "recognized" photographer, according to the cameramen's union, being considered worthy enough to be given awards, honors, mentions, etc., has little, if anything, to do with one's photographic creative abilities. "Creative photographic ability," as a matter of fact, means only one thing in Hollywood: ability to photograph a weeping-willow tree so that it resembles a nineteenth-century pastoral of a quiet English countryside, ability to photograph a baby (ain't-it-cute, etc.), ability to photograph a cross or some other religious symbol with emphasis on its sentimental appeal. This is "creative photography" a la Hollywood.

(To appreciate the extent to which this bogus conception of photography prevails in the American movie-capital, look through any issue of *International Photo-*

grapher. Its pages are filled with sentimental sceneries of willow trees, children on lawns, the cliffs at Laguna, picture-postcard views of interior scenery in Southern California and thousands of other examples of obvious, sentimental, bourgeois photography. Most of these reproductions are the efforts of cameramen engaged in the industry.)

Thus, while on one hand we fully agree with the protests of the Hollywood cameramen against the Academy's award to *Tabu* as far as these protests are based on comparisons between working-conditions on the Murnau-Flaherty production and working-conditions in Hollywood, on the other hand, we fail to see what the status of Murnau's photographer has to do with it. As a matter of principle, we do not understand just where this issue of "recognition" or "non-recognition" comes in. Most Hollywood cameramen are so jealous and so completely flushed with a sense of inferiority when they see a Soviet picture, that they either condemn the picture wildly or shut their eyes to the tremendous power and honesty of Soviet camera-work. They do not "recognize" this camera-work. But does this mean anything? Is Soviet film-photography bad photography, because Hollywood photographers feel injured by the comparison? Certainly not.

The cameramen's union of Hollywood understands very well why it has erected the insuperable barrier of an initiation-fee that ranges from \$750.00 to \$1000.00. The cameramen's clique of Hollywood has no desire to encourage new talent, to afford young creative ability a chance to function. What does it care if there be ten Tises at the gates of Hollywood? If it is moved at all by this fact, it will be moved to crush them and to shut its gates. It does not "recognize" any other photography except its own or that which it sanctions for its own purposes as an exclusive economic clique, regardless of how excellent, how truly wonderful other photography may be. It is therefore simply another manifestation of that narrow, ignorant outlook on the cinematic accomplishments of other nations which seems to be an inveterate characteristic of the Hollywood movie-mind.

THE PROPAGANDA QUESTION

Shortly after our third number appeared, our esteemed contemporary, the *Hollywood Spectator* (formerly the *Film Spectator*) in its issue of September 26, 1931, took space to say a few remarks concerning *Experimental Cinema*, proletarian art and the question of propaganda. The writer stated that he was "suspicious" when he read (in E. C. No. 3) that the magazine would "succeed in establishing the ideological and organizational foundations of an American working-class cinema." And he said that he was "surfeited" when he read comments on 'the American imperialist policy,' 'capitalist propaganda' and 'working-class audiences.' He went on to say that he did not recall "ever having met a man who considered himself permanently a member of the working class. I know many who are undoubtedly members of such a class, but they will bristle at the suggestion. The American as a race is young and optimistic. He is content with the present system because there is fat in it.

If he can not secure the fat, his children will, or his children's children—and they will secure it without the fuss and strife of revolution. That is his dream. A dream may be untrue, but while it endures its potency is unquestionable."

It is precisely because, as the *Spectator* has so clearly stated, the American worker is not yet class-conscious, that *Experimental Cinema* is greatly concerned about the production of workers' films in America and it is, similarly, because we recognize the idiocy and futility of the traditional dream that in America every worker has the chance of becoming rich, that we are earnestly and relentlessly striving to establish in this country a cinema which will analyze and destroy that dream in all its imbecilic aspects.

In this connection we may make the statement that life itself, in the form of depression, hunger and unprecedented capitalist brutality toward the working-class, is helping to burst this bubble. No doubt the *Spectator* is more or less dimly aware of the mass bread-lines of the Eastern and mid-Western cities, of the mass hunger in "sunny California" and of such internationally famous instances of capitalist America's "brotherly attitude" toward its wage-slaves as the incarceration of Tom Mooney, the murder of Sacco and Vanzetti, the massacring of Negroes, mine-workers, etc. But perhaps the *Spectator*, though it may have heard something of the foregoing events (not to be thought of, however, as possible material for a movie-comedy or a bedroom "art" masterpiece), is not yet acquainted with less publicized affairs such as the present reign of terror in Harlan, Kentucky, or the endless number of cases of industrial persecution, stool pigeon espionage, police bestiality and incommunicado imprisonments in the bastiles of America. Possibly—but we have no illusions—if the *Spectator* were even remotely acquainted with some aspects of the class-war that is taking shape beneath the smooth, glittering surface of American "civilization," it would realize to what extent life itself is justifying our cinema ideology and our film production policy. Verily, "a dream may be untrue, but while it endures, its potency is unquestionable." We believe the dream is breaking up now. We merely want to assist in the operation and establish a new "potency" actuated by a different vision of society.

We cannot refrain from quoting a few lines further from the *Spectator's* intriguing rumination. This, for example: "The mass impulse in art, such as *Experimental Cinema* champions, is stultifying and priggish, irrespective of what religious cause it involves."

We have reason to believe that the *Spectator* has little, if any, understanding of what is meant by "proletarian art"; but regardless of what it thinks we mean, does it not occur to the *Spectator* that it is being somewhat hypocritical and two-faced when it attempts to deny "the mass impulse in art" side by side with its orthodox championing of the most grossly standardized and crudely vulgar film "industry" in the world? What has suddenly happened to the *Spectator's* "box-office art"? What has suddenly become of the glorified Hollywood ideal of producing "art" films for twelve-year-old

minds and mental defectives? Truly, our friends, we are "surfeited"!

The *Spectator* concluded its meditation in a rather strange and, we think, contradictory way. It assured its readers that *Experimental Cinema* "will never be read by the working class it seeks to unshackle, but the best minds of Hollywood may make some money out of its suggestions." What an irony that a "suspicious" proletarian film journal should be called upon to supply Hollywood's purported "best minds" with ideas! We would like to know, however, in what way precisely the *Spectator* imagines that the film-ideology represented by *Experimental Cinema* can be grafted on to an opposite system, the Hollywood system? And how does it reconcile its opinion that we cannot be read by the uneducated workers with its suggestion that we can provide the "best minds" of Hollywood with ideas for further accumulation of money? Has the *Spectator* never heard of "educated morons"?

SOVIET STIMULATION IN HOLLYWOOD

In a recent conversation with one of the editors of *Experimental Cinema*, William K. Howard, director of *White Gold*, expressed himself with regard to the Russian cinema. He gave vent to his unbounded admiration of the Soviet productions. He said that they were far and away the greatest films in the world; that they had given an impetus to the cinema, the full effects of which could not be calculated at the present time. He said that up to the time when he first saw Soviet films, his interest in cinema had begun to slacken and he felt that it was hopeless to try to create anything worthwhile—the film and its problems had become sickeningly commercialized and creative activity was utterly impossible in Hollywood. Then came the Soviet product and it stimulated him like an electric shock. He became enthusiastic again—and he realized the limitless possibilities of what could be done in the cinema.

All this was an interesting part of the conversation with Mr. Howard. But what clearly indicated the man's intelligence, was his remark concerning montage. Unlike certain celebrated quacks who enjoy the name and position of "big directors" in Hollywood, Mr. Howard does not profess to know "all about" montage. On the contrary, he professes only a superficial knowledge of it, and consequently, as is often the case, we found that he understood more about it than he had claimed.

Moreover, Mr. Howard maintained that under the present system of things in Hollywood, he did not believe it was possible to "graft on" to American film-production the principles of technique which the Russian directors had evolved. The reason he believed this to be so, he explained, was because the subject-matter of the Soviet films, concerning itself basically with concepts and ideas, determines, necessitates and otherwise conditions the Soviet technique, whereas in the American product the conventional "plot-story" and so-called "entertainment" requirements form an insuperable obstacle to genuine image-construction at the very outset.

This statement from a man who has made one of the few meritorious films produced in the United States impressed us as being an honest, practical and intelligent recognition of what the American movie-system really is. The recent attempts of certain directors to "graft on" the montage-construction they have seen in the Soviet productions are futile and wasted efforts. As Mr. Howard put it, the only excuse a director can have for making fast cuts in the present films of Hollywood is to quicken the audience's attention, but that excuse in itself is a weak one and inconsistent with the montage-ideology.

Directors who imagine they can produce great pictures merely by incorporating a lot of quick cuts remind us of the "Socialists" and social reformers who imagine that they have only to institute certain reforms and "clean up" some ugly spots in the capitalist system in order to get rid of the evil itself and "evolve" a better system. It is patch-work, ineffective at best, retrogressive at the worst.

"THE HOLLYWOOD CODE"

Our friend Bryher, who co-edits *Close Up* with Kenneth MacPherson, had some interesting things to say in a recent number of the magazine. In a strong and successfully analytical attack against the "Hollywood Code" of picture-making, she wrote: "Wherever Hollywood has been accepted, there has been a definite lowering of the standards of cinema."

We are, of course, heartily in accord with this statement, and we believe—at least we sincerely hope—that it marks a clear recognition on the part of *Close Up* of the character and extent of the opposition to Eisenstein's art.

We maintain that there is no possibility of reconciling these two antipodal elements: Eisenstein and Hollywood; that the two are mutually exclusive; that the vanguard film-students throughout the world must choose definitely and uncompromisingly between them; that the term "Eisenstein" symbolizes everything in the cinema that is opposite to, and denied by, Hollywood.

Bryher herself has very charmingly expressed this deep-rooted antithesis in a section which we cannot refrain from quoting:

"Consider for instance, how Hollywood would have made *Potemkin*. The story by this time, must be familiar to all. Sailors on a Russian battleship refuse to eat meat covered with maggots. The doctor pronounces the food edible; men are to be shot for their complaint. In the ensuing mutiny their leader is killed. The townspeople, curious, indifferent and sympathetic, are shot down by Cossacks; the battleship sailing as it believes to death, sees instead the red flag appear on the masts of opposing ships.

"What would America have made of such a story?

"Maggots certainly would not have been permitted. Instead we should have opened with a sailor's bar, with plenty of females in sex-appeal promoting dresses and a cheerful song. The doctor need be little changed, but we would have had sinister designs upon the heroine who would, of course, have survived the perils of the under-

world because of her love for an old father-mother-grandparent or a young brother-sister-orphan-child at choice, helped by the patent-enamel body paint into which American stars are dipped.

"The leader of the mutineers would watch the doctor's advances, laugh, remember in a cut-back his old mother, knock the doctor out, pat the girl out of his way and sit down and drink. The doctor, not being in uniform, would leave muttering in sinister camera dissolves. Through the Odessa mists, the mutineer and the girl would discover love at first sight, to be broken apart at the first kiss clutch, by the memory of the sailor's waiting comrades. The heroine, jealous, would wander to the steps. Then, since Hollywood is wealthy in ideas as well as cameras, there are at least three directions open to the story. Simple love, the sailor is accused falsely by the doctor, is about to be shot, but is rescued as the sheet drops, by a comrade or the girl; romantic drama, the sailor is an officer disguised as a mutineer in order to discover some treacherous plot to overwhelm the ship; or a play of gangster life, the ship is loaded with alcohol, and the doctor and the mutineer are leaders of two separate bootlegging establishments. But the end of all the stories must be the same: a triumphal bridal procession down the Odessa steps, Cossacks in front with bayonets decorated with orange blossoms, sailors behind, the folk songs of the world, and on the edges, children with doves. The difference between this story and *Potemkin*, is the difference between *kitsch* and art."

Bryher concludes by suggesting that the next time the reader visits an American movie, he should form a mental picture of the way Eisenstein or Pudovkin would have treated the same subject and, conversely, the next time he sees a Soviet film he should imagine in his mind's eye how Hollywood would have made it. The movie-goer will then understand, says Bryher, "why the tinned ideas of Hollywood are so dangerous."

CHAPLIN, DE MILLE, AND ROWLAND BROWN ON CAPITALISM AND THE SOVIET UNION

There is a definite growth of liberal and semi-radical sentiment among the more intelligent members of the Hollywood film-colony. Some of them even read *The New Masses*, *The Left*, and other publications of the Revolution, but with what degree of understanding, appreciation and acceptance remains yet to be seen.

Recently, three individuals prominent in the American film-industry have expressed themselves openly and unmincingly on the question of capitalism's downfall and the Soviet Union.

In London Charlie Chaplin recently said that he did not see how the capitalist system could endure another five years.

De Mille, returning from the USSR, in an interview published in the *Los Angeles Record* and other papers, was not slow in declaring his enthusiasm and

admiration for the Soviet Union. Even before going to Russia, De Mille startled everyone by admitting bluntly that "there is something rotten at the core of our system."

Rowland Brown, director of the film *Quick Millions*, makes no secret of his sympathies with the first workers' and peasants' republic. One the eve of November 7 (anniversary of the 1917 Revolution), he sent a cablegram to the Soviet Government in which he extended his congratulations and stated that the system of society being built up by the Soviet Government is "the first real gesture at civilization."

FILM CULTURE IN THE U. S. A., 1931

Headline on the front page of the *Hollywood Daily Screen World*, Saturday, May 16:

"HIGH-HATTY" DRAMAS NUMEROUS

Repeated Warnings Against Intelligentsia Stuff Have Little Effect on Production" Brilliant Thought from *Improvement of Screen Entertainment*, by Frank Woods, a paper read at the Hollywood Convention of the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, May 28:

"... the news reel remains the one item on the theatre program that retains a permanent public appeal. Why is this? The reason is perfectly apparent. It tells the truth about things of interest. There is magic in the truth. Let us not forget this phrase. There is magic in the truth."

From the *Hollywood Herald*, June 16:

"The 'housewarming' at Bernie Toplitzy's new Malibu Beach home turned into one of the largest and most artistic parties ever 'thrown' for the picture colony. A beach set, 'Paris Streets' with cafe exteriors and tables on the strand, and an Eiffel Tower illuminated in the background, cost in excess of \$2,000. Two hundred guests, including many industry executives, attended, and two orchestras provided Spanish music and jazz, respectively. Specialties were contributed by Marilyn Miller, Buddy De Sylva, Tom Patricola, Harry Rosenthal, Nina May McKinney, Gus Shy, June MacCloy, Raquel Torres and Dorothy Burgess."

From *Variety*, June 23:

"I am not a radical," Mr. DeMille said, "but now things are a question of right and wrong... There is something rotten at the core of our system."

From an editorial in the *New York Times*, entitled *A Shakespeare for the Films*, July 27:

"The movie world is worried. In spite of the gigantic growth of the industry, with its chains of theatres round the world, there is cause for anxiety. Something more than the depression is at work. One producer defined the trouble: We don't know what we want exactly, and the public doesn't know what it wants. A more thoughtful analysis is offered by Marcel Rouff in an article in the *Mercure de France*. He believes that the reason for the *malaise* in films is revealed by the cry of one expert: When shall we have a Shakespeare of the cinema?

.... it would certainly be most interesting to see some producer take his eye off the older arts, and the box office, and give free play to cinema technique, with its infinite possibilities."

(Ed. Note: No mention was made in this editorial of S. M. Eisenstein, or of the Soviet cinema.)

Excerpt from an article in the *Los Angeles Times* of Sunday, August 9, entitled "The Reason Why Greta Garbo Will Not Talk:"

"Oh," said Greta, with a little sob of pure ecstasy, "I tell you what I like. I like to smell horses and look at sunsets."

Excerpts from the speech of Louis B. Mayer, Vice-President in charge of production of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, at the Annual Dinner of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, as reported in the *Los Angeles Examiner* of November 11:

"As one of the founders of the Academy, I tonight am thrilled with pride as I look upon this gathering, the most distinguished ever assembled in the history of this institution.

"From the capital of our nation has come Vice-President Curtis. Crossing the continent for the special purpose of attending this gathering, he honors us with his presence and the good wishes of the President of the United States.

"Leaving his busy office in Sacramento in order to be with us, the chief executive of the State of California graces our gathering with his presence. Surely this assemblage would be woefully incomplete without the presence of Governor James Rolph.

"Senators, public officials and some 200 leading newspaper publishers, men whose fingers are ever on the public pulse and whose wisdom in a great measure guides the trend of public affairs, are among our distinguished guests."

"As president of the Producers' Association, I perhaps am in a specially advantageous position to know just how much the industry owes to the Academy... and I say to you tonight, that it is the greatest factor for progress the producing industry has ever known.

"The producing of pictures is a complicated affair. It involves every bewilderment, from the intricate mazes of an abstruse science to the oftentimes equally intricate problem of the human equation.

"In this maze of bewilderment, the Academy has been a guiding light, straightening out our misunderstandings, solving our technical problems, helping us improve the artistry of our pictures and creating greater understanding between industry and public.

"And so tonight we are gathered to bestow the symbols of the accomplishments in the paths of progress. The little statuettes to be awarded tonight are, in themselves, small things, but their significance is truly great. Each and every one stands for an achievement of importance and benefit not only to us here tonight, but to the world at large."

Recent announcement of the Fox film

The Yellow Ticket, as advertised in Los Angeles newspapers:

TOMORROW
AT TWO THEATRES
GLORIOUS WOMANHOOD
BRANDED BY A NATION
REVELING IN SIN!

Russia!... Land of drama...
land of licensed love... land of

tyranny... where "The Yellow Ticket" is a badge of shame, but still a pass of privilege... into this maelstrom of blackened hearts is woven a courageous romance... a love that defied the persecution of a nation

Raoul Walsh's

"YELLOW TICKET"

HOLLYWOOD SEES "THE ROAD TO LIFE"

On the 22 of January, Nikolai Ekk's famous film of the *besprizornie* (homeless children, "wild boys"), *The Road to Life*, was given its American premiere—in Hollywood. This is the first time that the premiere of a Soviet film has taken place in Hollywood instead of in New York. The reason for the change in policy is probably due to the keen interest that the American movie-industry has manifested in the question of how Russia would come through with sound films.

The intelligent minority of Hollywood's technical people have long ago freely and spontaneously admitted that, as far as silent films were concerned, the Soviet producers had Hollywood backed off the map. Wherever the silent Soviet films were shown, they made Hollywood pictures look like old-fashioned penny-arcade shows.

And now the same intelligent minority, plus a number of new spectators from the commercial and technical departments of the American movie-industry, having seen *The Road to Life*, appreciate once again how far in advance of Hollywood the Soviet cinema has traveled. In the era of the silent film, American studios were the first to turn out a few films of a high artistic and creative standard. But in the new era of the sound-film, Soviet studios are the first, and so far the only, ones to give practical demonstration of what a sound-film should be.

What are the various reactions to this picture? What is being said about it in Hollywood?

There are many groups and a great many types of people in Hollywood. Some of the most typical and most vicious specimens of the American bourgeoisie, classical examples of the leisure class in its final stage of decadence, may be found here; and, on the other hand, there are many who go hungry, who are systematically denied the right to a job, though they live in the same town where "stars," illiterate directors, bathing-beauties and other good-looking parasites receive hundreds, even thousands, of dollars per week.

So, naturally, there are many different

reactions to such a strong propaganda film as *The Road to Life*.

First, the preview audience. (Private previews of Soviet films are always held at the Filmarte, the only theatre where Russian films are shown, a few days in advance of the public presentation.)

This audience comprised, altogether, about 60 to 70 individuals. At the film's conclusion, they all applauded enthusiastically. It was clear that Ekk's work really pleased them because two other Soviet productions, *The Black Sea Mutiny* and *A Jew at War*, were received by this same group of people with disappointment and general lack of approval. All considered *The Road to Life* one of the foremost achievements of the Soviet screen; all considered it a film of rare beauty and power.

Some formalists, however, found innumerable blunders in Ekk's treatment of the theme. The montage of the sequence where the *besprizornie* break up the machine-shop was severely criticized. It was charged that in this sequence Ekk's method of building up the image-structure was entirely formless, aimless and weakly conceived. This criticism was made again in reference to the scenes where the crowd rushes across the railroad track to the body of the dead Mustapha. These shots showed the people blackly silhouetted against the sky, but in the closer shots the emotional mood was different. There were other criticisms in kind, mostly concerning montage and Ekk's failures in formal matters.

The general summary of these technical (montage) criticisms was that the film was "spotty"—wonderful in certain spots, faulty in others. Comparisons were made with Eisenstein's montage of certain parts of *Potemkin*. But everyone, even the formalists, had praise for the ending (the last 500 feet), which was called a superlative piece of artistic construction.

It was evident to everyone that on the purely mechanical side (i.e., technological equipment), Soviet sound studios are not up to the capitalist studios of Hollywood. The visual-montage throughout *The Road to Life* is excellent. Sound-montage and sound-reproduction, however, are by no means on the same quali-

tative level. The sound-reproduction of this picture is not equal to that of the most banal American movie. It is greatly inferior to that of Ozepe's *Karamazov*. Whether this is due entirely to the inferior mechanical equipment of Soviet studios at the present time, or to a bad print, is hard to say. But now and then the sound-recording impaired Ekk's film to a great extent.

The audience at the first public showing of *The Road to Life* reacted to it with loud applause. Not since *Storm Over Asia* has a Soviet film been so splendidly received in Hollywood. The theme is one that is sympathetic to an average American audience. Children and young people have always been in demand on the American screen, and here is a film that does not treat children and young boys with the honey and syrup and the repulsive sentimental dishonesty of the so-called "children's picture" manufactured by Hollywood. On the contrary, the honesty and authenticity of Ekk's film of the *besprizornie* are manifest to everyone.

Yet many people here have criticized it as being "too romantic." The emotionalism of the film, they said, was not consistent with the clear-cut Marxist political ideology.

Several others held the characteristically bourgeois-American view that the film is "superficial" because it fails to deal with the "sex problem" of the *besprizornie*. These people want to know whether the *besprizornie* ever engaged in sexual intercourse after they entered the collective; whether they were allowed to play, to amuse themselves, to have games, sports, girls, etc. The episode where the *besprizornie* wreck the machinery of the collective was interpreted by these people as signifying that the *besprizornie* were sorely in need of emotional and sexual release after a long winter of relentless work!

Others found the picture "naive," pointing to the fact that in the beginning the *besprizornie* have fierce, wild, animated faces, while toward the end they look "sweet" and dress like American bourgeois boys.

Many people declared that the picture is too long. Others said the opposite, maintaining that it is so rich in substance and artistry that its length is one of its chief virtues.

There were some individuals, and perhaps there will be a few others before the picture finishes its run at the Filmarte, who found *The Road to Life* very "artificial."

The most popular scenes were Mustapha's appearance for the first time, before the Soviet Commission for Homeless Children and the "funeral train-ride" at the end. All audiences have heartily enjoyed the former, and it is no exaggeration to say that this scene alone has created a warmer feeling for the Soviet Union than anything else in the Soviet films shown here in the past season.

A curious reaction to *The Road to Life* was that of a bourgeois intellectual in Hollywood who, because of the "glorifi-

cation" of the locomotive, accused Ekk of a sort of "technological fetishism." (Cf. Anisimov's criticism of Eisenstein in *Literature of the World Revolution* No. 3.)

But on the other hand, many hungry people, many people who have long been without jobs—Hollywood's unorganized, unformed "bread-line"—have managed to see *The Road to Life*. They have not

asked questions, they have not analyzed it, discussed montage or argued about "technological fetishism." They simply have seen the film and have been tremendously impressed.

The success of *The Road to Life* in Hollywood marks the beginning of a very promising epoch of Soviet sound-films in the United States.
Hollywood, Calif.

NOTES FROM MOSCOW

By G. L. GEORGE

Translated from the French by
H. J. Salemsen

"Life is Beautiful," a Pudovkin Talkie

It is almost superfluous to recall the calumny which the bourgeois press of the entire world was only too happy to spread after the preview of this picture in Moscow. The report was that, the film having been suppressed by Soviet censorship, Pudovkin, because of a so-called "petit-bourgeois idealism" which supposedly pervaded the film, had been deprived of his workers' card and banned from the Communist Party. He was even about to be jailed, they said, and only the personal protection of Stalin was powerful enough to save him from the clutches of the G. P. U. Following these incidents, Pudovkin, disgusted with working in the USSR, was supposed to have fled to Berlin in the hope of getting a contract that would bring him to America.

It is only too easy to see that this is the classical anti-Soviet falsehood, but reinforced by those powers interested in discrediting the Russian cinema, the universally recognized quality of which threatens to compete too mercilessly with the international movie product.

Pudovkin immediately answered by a letter denying these stupid rumors, but, altho the general news press is supposed to be independent, it did not deem it useful to run this denial.

Here are a few extracts from Pudovkin's rectification: "This whole business is utterly false and absurd. You know how such things take place in Russia. The state has given the cinema an educational role, in the broadest sense of the term. It is not possible for any person to film anything he pleases. Each script, before entering production, is submitted to various departments which pass upon its cultural, artistic, and ideological values. If any details are found amiss, the writer is called in, and, together with the head of the department in question, he corrects his work.

"As for my own picture, it was not suppressed by censorship. Quite to the contrary, it was approved for public showing. And, as in the case of almost all important Russian pictures, it was openly discussed in the different circles competent to judge it. This criticism, because

of the extremely varied public opinion in USSR, brought up several suggested changes in certain parts of my film; which is a great point in favor of the general feeling of artistic and social responsibility on the part of the spectators as well as the technicians.

"My so-called flight from Moscow has an equally simple explanation. I am employed by the Mejrabpom, Russian name of the Workers' International Relief, (W. I. R.), which has its headquarters in Berlin. My position requires frequent commuting between that city and Moscow. In that manner, I played in *The Living Corpse*, which my old friend Ozep was making in Berlin.

"Conferences have been under way for several months to arrange for my going to Hollywood and directing a picture, employing the technical sound and dialogue equipment used in the California studios, an equipment which far surpasses that available even in the best studios of Europe."

Since this closes all misunderstanding concerning these incidents, let us glance at Pudovkin's picture. The scenario, which he wrote himself, is briefly this:

During the civil war, commandant Langovoi, a worker returned from the front, carries on the fight together with his wife Mascha and his childhood pal Boris, in the revolutionary ranks. Wounded in a scuffle, he enters a hospital, after sending his wife off to rest in the country at the home of a friend. After the revolution, life follows its habitual course. Langovoi, well once again, becomes attracted to another woman, a woman of society. Her beauty and refinement takes him away from his friends. Boris tries vainly to bring him back to his work. The comrades disapprove of him. Having by chance gone to a club-meeting, he is heckled, and it takes all of Boris' tact to get him away safely. This incident completely convinces him that he no longer has anything in common with his onetime companions. But he thereupon receives a letter from Mascha, completely back to health, announcing her return. Before he even has time to consider what he will do, she arrives. On seeing her again, her natural charm, her unpainted beauty, he realizes that she is really the one he loves and he can forget the other woman and the life away from his class, for now, there is no doubt, "life is beautiful."

With this banal story of the new life of Russia, the author of *The End of Saint Petersburg* has made an admirable film. The sound, recorded by professor Obolenski, is used by Pudovkin to such advantage that it is obvious that after a few laboratory experiments he has learned to exploit it to the utmost.

The superlative quality of the photography, a perfect rhythm never interrupted in its continuity and harmony, a complete comprehension of the individual and collective souls of the Russian people, and especially the "Pudovkin manner," personal and vibrant, his exact appreciation of the value and duration of every image, these all contribute toward making *Life is Beautiful*, along with *Mother*, the most human and the most pathetic of Pudovkin's films.

THE NEW SOVIET FILM PROGRAM

A Report from the "Moskauer Rundschau"

To celebrate the October holidays, Soyus kino released a number of new films, the most notable of which was the sound film *Mountains of Gold*, directed by Jutkevitch. The musical score was written by the famous Soviet composer, Shostakovitch. The picture deals with the strike of the Putilov-works in conjunction with the striking naphtha workers of Baku in 1914. The hero is a peasant who, through a gradual and difficult process, becomes a class-conscious worker.

The direction is good only in parts and on the whole it has nothing new to offer, for the director retains almost literally ideas and images from the films of his former good teachers. However, the sound treatment and musical score are of interest—in fact, at times the director becomes so enamored of the spoken word that he causes the film to drag, and unpardonable lengths of dialogue escape him entirely.

The themes of the other new films of Soyus kino all deal with the contemporary life of the Soviet Union—how to overcome a shortage of production in a factory, reconstruction of transport, the building of important industries, advancing education in schools to the status of a polytechnicum, mechanisation of the Don Basin, industrial and cultural progress of the miners, etc., etc.

Mezhrabpom announces the following program of production for this winter: Five films are to be released, which are likewise to arouse the interest of foreign countries. The most prominent one is Pudovkin's film *The Steamer Piatiletka*. The hero is a worker from Hamburg who is engaged in the shipbuilding industry. He is working on the construction of a steamer which is to be delivered to the Soviet Union. He is transported on this steamer to Russia, and soon takes an active part in the great Five-Year-Plan. Further details pertaining to this new Pudovkin film are unfortunately not available at present. Pudovkin, however, just returned from a location trip in Hamburg and Odessa and will soon make his

own report on the progress of his work.

Two other feature films will be released in the near future, *The House of the Dead* and *The Horizon*.

The House of the Dead is being directed by Fedorov, a co-worker of Meyerhold whose work, *Roar, China!* is well known abroad. The continuity of this Dostoevski novel is by Victor Shklovsky, one of the most popular film-writers of Soviet Russia. (The films, *Bulat Batir* and *The Gentlemen Skotininy*, and others are also by him). In the film *The House of the Dead*, Dostoevski himself is the leading character. The central idea is Dostoevski's conception that Russia is the prison of all peoples. Dostoevski recognizes this truth—but forced labor breaks his will. He then sings hymns of praise to the aristocracy, writes reactionary novels and his final effort, to

resurrect the revolutionary dreams of his youth, comes too late. *The Brothers Karamazov*, whose heroes he wanted to make into revolutionaries, remains unfinished.

The Horizon, the other feature sound film, is under the direction of Kuieshov, the former teacher of Pudovkin. The scenario of this film has also been written by Victor Shklovsky. It deals with a young Jew in a small town on the southern coast of Russia. He struggles along and dreams of America. His friends try to draw him into the revolutionary movement, but he longs for bourgeois democracy. He emigrates to the United States and is later drafted into the U. S. Army, where he gets a thorough drilling. He begins to realize that there is no difference between the Czar's Army and the American Army, except that the latter has better military equipment. In

the end he goes with the American Expeditionary Forces to Siberia. Here he deserts and joins the Revolution, to help the Bolsheviks in the construction of the Soviet Union.

Another film of the young director, *Comrade Li-Fu*, treats of the Communist Revolution in Southern China. The film was made on the southern borders of the Soviet Union in Central Asia. The cast consist mainly of Chinese.

Finally, the film *The War Is Not Yet Over*, directed by Yrinov, should also be mentioned. The montage and sound-treatment reflect strongly the influence of the works of Vertov. (Vertov himself will now also work under the banner of Mezhrabpom-Film.)

(Translated by Christel Gang)

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