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## SOVIET CINEMA: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Friday, November 11 - 8pm

### (THE ASCENT)

CAST: B. Plotnikov, V. Gostjuhin

Directed by: Larissa Shepitko

Larissa Shepitko is one of the very few young women among controversial film makers at present. She came to Moscow from the Ukraine to study at the Cinema Institute, and became a pupil of Dovzhenko. Her first short, *LIVING WATER* (1960) carries the mark of her teacher. Shepitko is fascinated by painting and music, and her films bear witness of this. Her diploma work *HEAT* (1963), was made in the Kirghizian steppes. She was fortunate in having a very good script by S. Lungin and I. Nusinov, and an excellent cameraman, Yuri Sokol (all friends from VGIK times). The lead was taken by a Kirghizian student of the director's department of VGIK, Bolot Shamshiev, who was later to become a director himself.

*HEAT* was made under gruelling conditions, on barren steppes without a single tree for shade, under the burning sun, when the temperature rose to 40-50 degrees C, and film stock literally melted in the heat. On top of all this the 22-year-old girl-director fell ill in the middle of shooting. But she did not give up and had herself transported to location every day on a stretcher. It is a cruel film about hard work and human conflicts in the arid semi-desert of Central Asia, without the usual propagandist highflown phrases of the official press and newsreels.

Shepitko made her second feature, *WINGS*, in 1966, which deals with the problem of the generation gap. The heroine, Nadezhda Petrovna, was a much decorated fighter pilot during the war who shot down many German aircraft. She recalls the years of her militant youth, and her friends who did not return. She secretly envies those who are still serving in aviation, because she herself cannot work as a pilot any more. She is now fort-two, a deputy of the Town Soviet (Council), respected and honoured by the local people, but her personal life is less happy. She is lonely and does not like her job as director of a vocational school. The pupils do not like her either--her way of ordering people around, her indifference, her heartless manner. A pupil of her school, looking directly into her face, says, "I detest you!" Even her only daughter has no common language with her. Nadezhda Petrovna, of course, tried to understand, but her puritanism (the daughter has a lover) prevents it. *WINGS* is built around one actress, Maya Bulgakova, as Nadezhda Petrovna, who had previously appeared only in small roles, without much hope of a breakthrough. Such a film naturally aroused a violent controversy in the Press: "We have no conflicts between parents and children", "To show a war veteran in this way is to jeer at the war heroes", and so on.

Now Shepitko is making a film about modern youth *YOU AND I*, at Norilsk, in deepest Siberia, which in Stalin's time was the capital of a huge region populated almost exclusively by concentration camp inmates.



The famous poetess, Bella Akhmadulina, a former wife of Yevgeni Yevtushenko, will act in the film.

---Jeanne Vronskaya, Young Soviet Film Makers

Byelorussia, the winter of 1942. A partisan unit is moving through the deep snow, in retreat from one of the German's special anti-partisan forces. With the partisans are women and children from the devastated villages: everyone is worn out and utterly exhausted. Two men--an experienced partisan called Rybak, and Sotnikow, a Soviet officer who had broken through enemy lines to join the partisans after his own unit was surrounded--are detailed to procure provisions for the entire group. Sotnikow is ill and could have refused the assignment; but he stubbornly prefers to follow Rybak through the snow and the biting winds.

After a chance encounter with the local police, the partisans manage only with great difficulty to evade their pursuers and seek refuge in a farmhouse. But their escape is short-lived and they are soon arrested. They must now endure torture, interrogations and the constant fear of death; and these experiences will reveal the fundamental differences in their characters.

Program presented in association with the Los Angeles Film Exposition and The American Film Institute