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FILM STUDY GROUP -- Program 6:

STRIKE

U.S.S.R., 1925

Production: Goskino and Proletkult

Scenario: Proletkult collective (Valeri Pletnyov, Sergei M. Eisenstein, I. Kravchunovsky, and G.V. Alexandrov)

Directed by Sergei M. Eisenstein

Assistant directors: G.V. Alexandrov, I. Kravchunovsky, A. Levshin

Photography: Eduard Tissé and Vasili Khvatov

Designer: Vasili Rakhals

Cast includes: Alexandrov, Maxim Straukh, Mikhail Gomarov, Judith Glizer, Boris Yurtsev, Alexander Antonov.

Out of the film experiments of Kuleshov and Vertov, as well as out of his own experimental innovations as designer and director for the Proletkult Theatre, there...emerged Sergei Eisenstein, whose first film, Strike, triumphantly closes this introductory period [of Soviet cinema]...arbitrarily bounded between February 1924, and February 1925 -- and inaugurates the period of accomplishment and success....

The most advanced group of writers and performers, working at the Central Moscow Theatre of the Proletkult, now deliberated the question of film work for the entire collective, and decided on the following plan: to make a series of films to be called 'Towards the Dictatorship [of the Proletariat]', to record all the lessons learned by Russian workers in their pre-revolutionary struggles -- in strikes, underground activities, illegal publications, political organization, etc. The collective, supervised by Valeri Pletnyov and Eisenstein, began work on a scenario for the fifth in the series, Strike, the only film of the projected series to be made....

At this moment...another great period was just ending in Sweden -- with Sjostrom already departed for America, and Stiller providing a sort of swan-song with The Story of Gösta Berling. Germany had started to export most of its talent to America, too, leaving Murnau, whose The Last Laugh appeared that December, to wait for a later boat. Soon only G.W. Pabst and Fritz Lang remained to carry on the development of the German film, so important to the whole world during the earlier post-war period. France produced, this year, its best avant-garde cinema, while in America, Griffith was making his last great spectacle, America, Stroheim his greatest film, Greed, and Flaherty his most wonderful, Moana. The film world outside the Soviet Union seemed at a peak. The Soviet film was just beginning its climb.

Beginning too was not only Eisenstein's film career, but the inseparable and harmonious collaboration between the artist-logician Eisenstein and the artist-craftsman Eduard Tissé....Between...news-reels and Strike, Tissé photographed other films, but not until he met a director as swift and fearless as himself did his talent display itself fully.

Eisenstein based his film method on his theatrical principle of 'montage of attractions', meaning that every moment the spectator spends in the theatre should be filled with the maximum shock and intensity, within and between each episode. Strike is full of cinematic metaphors and images of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste; it is a deluge of real things and surroundings -- the spying in the latrine, the union meeting in the row-boat, the hosing of the demonstrating strikers, the final débâcle...Strike warns us to listen more attentively to Eisenstein's declarations of cinema as a synthesis of arts and sciences. Strike is no single experiment in

