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Abram Room
BED AND SOFA
1927

6:30, 8:50

Before Stalin crushed artistic freedom in the Soviet Union, revolutionary artists in the cinema brought the art of the film to the highest level it had ever reached anywhere: in fact, it is arguable if any cinema or film movement since has equalled that level. As true revolutionaries, the Soviet film-makers were interested in exploring the problem of sex in a collective, socialist society: how to overcome the repressive bourgeois concepts of sex that centuries of private property and male-dominated capitalism had entrenched deep in the psychic recesses of Western man; how to answer the questions for a socialist society posed by Engels in "The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State"? A film like Ermler's **Parisian Cobbler** faced the problem squarely (it is still unavailable outside certain archives) in a story of sexual jealousy among youthful communists supposedly liberated of reactionary possessiveness in respect to the genitals of one's love partner. A film like Room's **Bed and Sofa** treats sex more lightly in a comic framework — a housing shortage in Moscow forces a young worker to put-up a comrade on his sofa, but soon the sleeping arrangements are permuted — but in crusading for the sexual independence of women, in frankly treating abortion as a human right, this extraordinary film deserves the highest recognition as a mature work of socialist art. With Nikolai Batalov, Ludmila Semyonova, and Vladimir Fogel.