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THE POTEMKIN

Amkino Production presented by Leon S. Zamkovey. Directed by S. M. Eisenstein. At the Biltmore, New York, for a run beginning Dec. 5. Running time, 58 mins. No cast given. 1926

Something radical must have happened to this film prior to permission for its showing in New York being granted. Otherwise those who saw the film in its original form must have been over-enthusiastic or off their nut from a showmanship standpoint. As this screen version of the mutiny aboard a Russian cruiser now stands it may interest a few Russians in this country, but it is utterly devoid of entertainment and box office value.

The authorities need not fear that the showing of this picture will cause any unrest among the lower classes in this country, for not enough of them will see it to make any difference. Those that are out-and-out reds, and those that are inclined to socialism will undoubtedly find great things about the picture, but hardly anyone else will.

There were stories months ago of a tremendously powerful motion picture that had been sent into this country by the Russian Soviet and that it was being kept under cover until such time as it could be shown. Those few who were permitted to see the picture privately raved about it. It was the picture of the "Potemkin" revolt. Word went along the street about the picture, and when announced that it finally was to be shown publicly there were a lot of people in the trade who wanted to see it. They were there Sunday night, and they walked out of the theatre very much disappointed.

In the first place, the showing was to have started at 8:30, but it was nine when things got under way. There was an overture that lasted minutes upon minutes, and then a scenic was shown, and after that there was an intermission. After intermission came an intermezzo and then a presentation, which consisted of a reproduction of the deck of a battleship and a double sextet of male singers indulging in some Russian songs. Well enough for the Russians that were present, but the balance of the audience was bored to death by the proceedings up to this point. However, they had come to see the picture, "Potemkin," and they stuck.

The picture opens with a title to the effect that this is a reproduction of the uprising of the crew of the cruiser, Prince Potemkin, in Odessa harbor in 1905, the reproduction made possible through the official records from the Russian

Navy archives of the original mutiny. The initial shots on board the cruiser show the men complaining over the food being served, the inspection of that food and its being passed by the ship's doctor. Then the men refuse to go to mess when the food is served, and the commander calls them to quarters and asks those that are satisfied with the food to take one step forward out of the ranks. All the officers and six members of the crew step out. In the ranks there is a movement started by one of the crew for all hands to muster at the front turret and the crew breaks ranks without orders from the officers. This enrages the commander to such an extent that he calls for the marines and orders a group of the men shot to death. The marines refuse to fire when ordered to do so, whereupon the seamen of the ship acclaim them as brothers, arm themselves and

attack their officers, throwing them overboard.

In command of the ship, they take the body of their slain leader to Odessa and place it under a tent on one of the docks so that the city may be informed of their story. The city hears, heeds, and offers support to the revolting crew, whereupon the Cossacks set upon the citizens and a massacre occurs—the Odessa massacre, which aroused the world.

The next day the Czar's fleet is seen approaching to capture the mutineers, but when the fleet arrives its gunners refuse to fire on the Potemkin, which steams out to sea. The ship is later interned by the Roumanian Government and the men informed that if they return to their own country they will be given fair trial, but according to a title presented here, the government broke its word, shot the ring-leaders immediately on their return and sentenced the balance of the crew to exile in Siberia.

That is the story of "The Cruiser Potemkin" as depicted by film.

To Russians this may all mean something. As a pictorial historical record for the archives of the Soviet Government it may also mean something, but to the average American, unless he be an out-and-out red, it doesn't mean a damn. And that's that. Fred.