

Document Citation

Title	Soviet silent cinema: part 2: 1926-1927
Author(s)	David Robinson Sonia Volochova
Source	<i>Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.)</i>
Date	1975 Oct 09
Type	program note
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	3
Subjects	Dovzhenko, Alexander Petrovich (1894-1956), Ukraine
Film Subjects	Yahidha kokhannya (Fruits of love), Dovzhenko, Alexander Petrovich, 1926 Sumka dipkuriera (Diplomatic pouch), Dovzhenko, Alexander Petrovich, 1928

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

October 2 - November 18, 1975

SOVIET SILENT CINEMA

(LOVE'S BERRY
DIPLOMATIC POUCH

Part 2: 1926-1927

By special arrangement with Gosfilmofond, the Soviet State Film Archive, and the Pacific Film Archive of the University Art Museum at Berkeley, the Department of Film will present the second of a three-part retrospective of Soviet cinema in its silent period. This program is the most comprehensive ever mounted outside the U.S.S.R. of the classic and revolutionary films of the Soviet Union.

Part I, comprising 29 titles, covered the years from 1918 through 1925, and was presented in 1974 from March 7th through April 15th. Part 2 limits itself to the two peak years, 1926 and 1927, and will include forty titles to be exhibited from October 2nd through November 18th. Part 3, completing the silent years of Soviet filmmaking, will be announced in the future.

The works in the retrospective were selected from a list of surviving Soviet silents in the Gosfilmofond Archive by Professor Jay Leyda in consultation with Victor Privato, Director of Gosfilmofond, and Tom Luddy, Program Director of the Pacific Film Archive. Professor Leyda is the author of the definitive text in English on the history of Russian and Soviet cinema, Kino.

The majority of the prints in Part 2 will contain only the original Russian inter-titles. Some of the films which will complement the program will be from the Museum's own collection, and many of these will have English intertitles. Almost all the films will be in 35mm.

Synopses and detailed information will be distributed at each screening. The documentation for the notes has been supplied through the generosity of Gosfilmofond, Jay Leyda, the Pacific Film Archive, Jacques Ledoux of the Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique (Brussels), Vlada Petric and Andy McKay. Additional information is also drawn from the Museum's own Study Center files. The Department of Film owes a special thanks to Sonia Volochova who is not only translating from original Russian sources but who is assisting in the compiling of these notes as well.

Thursday, October 9 at 5:30

LOVE'S BERRY

Saturday, October 11 at 3:00

DIPLOMATIC POUCH

Alexander Dovzhenko

"As far as I was concerned, there were no questions of style or form involved. I worked like a soldier who fights the enemy, without thought of rules or theory. I dare say if I had been asked then what I was thinking about, I should have answered, like Courbet to a lady's question, "Madame, I am not thinking - I am excited". Nineteen years after his death and eighty since his birth, the excitement and elation of high poetry still communicate in Dovzhenko's best work - the sheer delirium of ZVENIGORA to be shown Oct. 11 at 5:30, the thundering concentration of ARSENAL, the pitch of tension of that humming summer's night in EARTH.

Dovzhenko came impulsively to the cinema, but it was a late impulse. While the other leaders of the Soviet cinema had been recruited in their teens and early twenties, he was an old man, comparatively, when, at 32, he made his first essays in the medium. Peasant born, he had been a teacher, then a diplomat; then took up painting and worked as a cartoonist for a Kharkov newspaper. Only when he read in one of the avant-garde journals of the day that painting was the art of the past did he pack his bag and set

off for the film studios in Odessa. Strangely, considering the lyrical and passionate and patriotic vision of his mature work, he wanted to be a director of comedy, and his first film was a slapstick two-reeler. After another essay, however, this time a rip-roaring adventure story, came the magical ZVENIGORA; and Dovzhenko's career was firmly set. Dovzhenko had his own inimitable poetic means: a profound feeling for the image and for movement, for juxtaposition and rhythm and counterpoint; an ability to assort and assimilate all kinds of experience, myth and history, reality and the fantastic, instinct and experience. But more than this, as Ivor Montagu wrote: "Dovzhenko was a creator and in every one of his films he was expressing his own view, his own apprehension at once simple and complex. He held fast to his peasant background; practically all his films and writings **were** concerned with the expression of his own land. But he was also a child of the Socialist revolution; regardless of the disappointments (and they were often grave in his case) he never swerved from his faith in the ideal. And beyond this, too, he possessed a sense of the universal, a continuity that comprehended birth and death - the birth and death of man; the renewal of nature; the creation of a hydro-electric dam or the drowning of a village. Dovzhenko was excited. It is more important with him to feel than to comprehend literally. "This unmatched poet of the cinema" wrote Montagu again, "wings our entrails with his vision of that universal truths."

-David Robinson

National Film Theatre (London), Program Notes, August -
November 1975

It will come as a surprise to many that the first solo efforts of Dovzhenko, the film poet of the Ukraine, were an American-type slapstick comedy (LOVE'S BERRY) and an action thriller, equally American in manner (DIPLOMATIC POUCH). Though neither film prepares one for the montage dynamics of this director's later work, both contain the embryo of his subsequent cinematic style. An earlier film (1926), VASYA, THE REFORMER (VASYA-REFORMATOR), written and co-directed by Dovzhenko with Fyodor Lopatinsky, an unimportant filmmaker, was conventional in form, despite fantasy elements in the script. (Vlada Petric, "Montage Structures in Dovzhenko's Silent Films," an unpublished essay).

As far as can be ascertained, neither LOVE'S BERRY nor DIPLOMATIC POUCH, was ever shown in the United States or England; both films are omitted even from the comprehensive Dovzhenko retrospective mounted by the National Film Theatre in London, September 15-26, 1975. We are therefore especially pleased at the opportunity to introduce these films, in association with the Pacific Film Archive -- not only as a contribution to the study of a truly creative artist, personal in style and thought, but also as one more corroboration of the influence exerted by the omnipresent American film.

The synopses that follow are composites based on material in Soviet Fiction Films: An Annotated Catalog (Vol. I, pp. 177-78, No. 419, pp. 228, No. 519) and "Montage Structure in Dovzhenko's Films," an unpublished essay by Vlada Petric.

LOVE'S BERRY or BERRIES (YAGODKA LYUBVI). 1926. Release date not known. 2 reels. VUFKU. (Yalta). Russian intertitles. ca. 30 minutes.

Alternate English titles: THE FRUITS OF LOVE; THE STRAWBERRIES OF LOVE. Russian alternate titles: PARIKMAKHER ZHAN KOLBASYUK (BARBER JEAN KOLBASYUK); ZHENITBA KAPKI (KAPKA'S MARRIAGE).

Scenario and direction: Alexander Dovzhenko. Photography: Daniil Demutsky, I. Rona; Design: I. Suvorov.

Cast: N. Krushelnitsky (Jean Kolbasyuk, barber); M. Chardynina-Barskaya (the girl); Dmitri Kapka (salesman in toyshop); I. Zamychkovsky (fat man who buys "berry" instead of doll); V. Lisovsky (old man to whom fat man passes "berry"); A. Belov (fat client); L. Chembarsky (dandy to whom old man passes "berry"). I. Zemgano (photographer) K. Zapadnaya (girl on boulevard); N. Nademsky (soda vendor).

Synopsis

From the moment his sweetheart, Liza, **throws** a baby into his arms and flees, barber Jean's troubles begin. To get rid of the unwanted burden he leaves it in a toyshop. The shop's salesman mistakes it for a doll. The mistake is discovered only when the "doll" wets her box. The frightened salesman palms the baby off to a customer. The latter, in turn, returns the "living doll" to Jean's barbershop. In his efforts to quiet the baby, the inept "father" feeds it through an atomizer, then leaves it in a shop again. After more misadventures, he is summoned to family court, where Liza claims that the baby is the product (berry) of their love. Jean agrees to marry her. Only then does she reveal the ruse she employed to get him to do so, since he was unwilling to marry her "of his own free will." In a scene of domestic bliss, Jean asks: "Is our child a boy or a girl?" Liza's answer: "Our child? That's my aunt's child!"

DIPLOMATIC POUCH (SUMKA DIPKURIERA). 1927. Released March 24, 1927 (Kiev), January 24, 1928 (Moscow). VUFKU (Odessa). Incomplete. Russian intertitles. ca. 50 minutes.

Direction: Alexander Dovzhenko. Scenario: M. Zatz, B. Sharansky (revised by Dovzhenko). Photography: N. Kozlovsky. Design: G. Bayzengerts. Assistant director: K. Ignatiev. Assistant cameraman: K. Kulyaev. Make-up: Fyodorov. Titles: Yu. Yanovsky.

Cast: M. Buyukli (secretary of embassy); A. Klimenko (first diplomatic courier); G. Zelendzhev-Shipov (second diplomatic courier); I. Penso (Ellen, a ballerina); B. Zagorsky (a spy); S. Minin (Inspector White); G. Skoretsky (Boatswain Harry, son of sentry); I. Kapralov (Ralph, a sailor); O. Suslov (sentry); Redina (his wife); G. Pinkler (Jack, sentry's youngest son); V. Komaretsky (captain of ship Victoria); O. Merlati (captain's mate); Alexander Dovzhenko (stoker); Dmitri Kapka (a passenger); K. Eggers (boxing sailor); A. Belov (innkeeper); M. Smolensky (passenger with eyeglasses); E. Chernova (ballerina's maid); Tarasevich (harbor master), Kalvelis, Solntsev, Lansky (passengers); P. Matvienko (first bandit); Sandulevsky (second bandit).

The film is based on the murder of the Soviet diplomat Nette by White émigrés in a foreign country. The murder was sensationalized in the Soviet press and became a large political issue. Even Mayakovsky "immortalized" the occasion in a poem, in which he exclaimed: "I want to await my moment of death in the same way as Comrade Nette faced his."

Synopsis

The Soviet Embassy in England sends two diplomatic couriers carrying confidential information to Leningrad. By order of Inspector White of the secret police, they are attacked on the train bearing them to Portsmouth. As they bravely defend the diplomatic pouch, one of them is killed in the unequal fight. The other, gravely wounded, jumps from the speeding train with the pouch. He's picked up and cared for by the switchman-inspector. Before dying, the wounded man pleads with the switchman to get the pouch to his nephew Harry, a sailor on the English ship Victoria, which is sailing for Leningrad. By threatening to kill the switchman's wife, Inspector White learns of the pouch's destination, and a chase begins. White, his assistant, and his spy, the ballerina Ellen, board the Victoria at the last moment. But, risking their lives, the British sailors safeguard the pouch and deliver it to Leningrad.

-Sonia Volochova