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THE PARISIAN COBBLER (PARIZHSKY SAPOZHNIK). 1927. Released on February 7, 1928. Drama.
6 reels. ~~Sovkino~~ (Leningrad). Russian intertitles. ca. 70 minutes.
Alternate titles: THE PARISIAN SHOEMAKER: THE PARIS SHOEMAKER.

Direction: Friedrich Ermler; Scenario: N. Nikitin, B. Leonidov; Photography and design:
Yevgeni Mikhailov, G. Bushtuyev; Assistant director: Robert Maiman; Director's assistant:
V. Portnov.

Cast: Fyodor Nikitin (Kirik, a deaf-mute); Valery Solovtsov (Andrei); Veronica
Buzhinskaya (Katya, a member of the Komsomol); B. Chernova (Vera, Komsomol member and
Katya's friend); Yakov Gudkin (Motka Tundel, a hooligan); V. Myasnikova (Olga, an activist);
S. Antonov (Grisha Kolobov, secretary of the Komsomol cell); O. Gortseva, V. Plotnikov
(Katya's parents); A. Melnikov.

Period: The NEP years. The revolution notwithstanding the small towns retain their
old provincial ways. The people spy with avid, prying eyes. Katya, who works in a cotton
mill and is a member of the Komsomol (Communist Youth League) lives in one such town.
She's in love with Andrei, also a Komsomol member. It does not even occur to them to
hide their love. But Katya's joyous dreams and hopes are suddenly shattered. Andrei is
indignant at the news of her pregnancy. "Swaddling clothes" are not for him! He's
nauseated by such "bourgeoise"! The secretary of his Komsomol cell, to whom he appeals
for a way out of his predicament, offers no resolution of his dilemma. But his "pals,"
rowdies and loafers, do. They counsel him to confuse the tracks by inducing Katya to
sleep with them. Katya is outraged. Nevertheless, scandalous gossip about her loose
morals quickly spreads all over town. She is ostracized, expelled from the collective,
cast out of home. Help comes, eventually, from her Komsomol mates at the mill. They
find Kirik, the deaf-mute "Parisian" cobbler, who is in love with her. By means of
gestures and miming he establishes her innocence. Exonerated, she is reinstated at the
Komsomol. It is Andrei who is permanently expelled.

The film ends with a question: "Who is guilty"?

Soviet Fiction Films:
An Annotated Catalog, Vol. I. Moscow,
1961, pp. 217-18, No. 497.

Translated and revised by Sonia Volochova

In the wake of the Civil War two problems plagued the Soviet Union: gangsterism, especially in Leningrad, and licentiousness in the Komsomols. The first is the concern of KATKA'S REINETTE APPLES, the second is the theme of THE PARISIAN COBBLER. It was Ermler's treatment of the latter that first drew attention to his work. A concise account of the aim and motivations of THE PARISIAN COBBLER (from Paul Babitsky and John Rimberg, The Soviet Film Industry, p. 129) is given below. As will be noted, the summary of the plot in this account differs from the synopsis drawn from the Soviet catalog.

"The major theme was the struggle of a Komsomol cell to improve the morals of its members and to make them more considerate in their relations with other human beings. Before production began the scenario was discussed at Party and Komsomol conferences and passed up through the various levels in the hierarchy until its sensitive theme was finally approved by the Komsomol Committee of the Leningrad Oblast. The heroine of the film, pregnant and abandoned by the young man involved, also a Komsomol member, cannot obtain help either from the Komsomol cell or from representatives of the Party, all of whom are indifferent and callous to her. Turned away everywhere, she finds friendly aid and shelter with the non-Party Kirik, a deaf mute who keeps a small shop of his own called "The Paris Shoemaker"... The contrast drawn between Party and non-Party characters to the honour of the outsider explains in large part the heightened interest of the public in this film..."

The co-director of KATKA'S REINETTE APPLES and sole director of THE PARISIAN COBBLER, Friedrich Ermler (May 13, 1898 - July 12, 1967) is best known for FRAGMENT OF AN EMPIRE (OBLOMOK IMPERII), 1929 (intermittently shown at the Museum), and PEASANTS (KRESTYANE), 1935 (shown some years ago). An incomplete version of his HOUSE IN THE SNOWDRIFTS (1927) will be shown on October 12 at 5:30

"The little boy who ran errands for a pharmacist and organized the other children of the neighbourhood to act out his filmscripts in the backyard, was at last prepared to put his dreams and hopes on celluloid. His days as bit player (in Viskovsky's RED PARTISANS) and student of the Leningrad Film Technicum ended with a clear position of his future 'fundamentalist' approach to realism. Being the only communist among the students led him to take a position for 'revolutionary content' as against "revolutionary form", then being noisily declared by the FEX group. To oppose this emphasis on outer effects Ermler organized KEM (Experimental Film Workshop) among the students; the group planned and staged films without film-stock. On graduating from Technicum he and another beginner-director, Eduard Johanson, proceeded to put their principles on film. Their first jointly directed film was CHILDREN OF STORM (released August 17, 1926), on the role played by young communists in the defence of Petrograd during the Civil War; the adventures of one Komsomol group captured by the White Guards, and of another group endeavouring to rescue them, kept the film moving, but with no especial revelation of character. The two young men were still learning their craft. Their next effort was more memorable, more quiet in tone, and closer in spirit to Ermler's mature work, still to come, KATKA'S REINETTE APPLES."

Jay Leyda, Kino, pp. 216-17.

"Ermler may be regarded as a model Communist director. The son of a cabinet maker, he is one of the few prominent Soviet directors who joined the Communist Party as a young man. After applying for Party membership in 1919 he enrolled as a student in the Leningrad Film Institute. Ermler began work at the Leningrad studios in 1924 and directed four films within the next five years. Although his work was criticized for "impressionism" and "Freudianism," Ermler became editor of the journal Proletarskoye kino (Proletarian Film) and was sent to study at a Communist academy for two years. He joined Sergei Yutkevich in directing COUNTERPLAN (1932), one of the first films to introduce socialist realism to the Soviet screen. The film, which concerned sabotage in Soviet industry, was

well received by Communist critics. Ermler spent three years writing and directing his next film, PEASANTS (1935), and was awarded the Order of Lenin the year of its release, although censors finally deleted one scene of the film after criticism of Ermler's 'naturalistic tendencies.' His film GREAT CITIZEN (Part One, 1937; Part Two, 1939) was a fictionalized biography of the assassinated Communist leader Kirov.

During the Second World War Ermler became a supervising director. He was made responsible for the work of A. Ivanovski, who directed the picture ANTON IVANOVICH GETS MAD (1942). In addition to supervisory work, Ermler directed his own film SHE DEFENDS HER COUNTRY (1943). After the war THE TURNING POINT (1946), a fictionalized version of the battle for Stalingrad made under his direction, won high praise from Soviet critics. While Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Lukov, Kozintsev, and Trauberg found themselves in serious trouble because of 'ideological errors' in their latest films, Ermler won a Stalin Prize for 1946. Later he directed GREAT FORCE (1950), which deals with the campaign by Communist scientists to end 'obedience to foreign science.'

Biographical Information

Paul Babitsky and John Rimberg,
The Soviet Film Industry, pp. 310-11.

The heady years of the Soviet silent film developed not only great directors, but great cameramen as well. The co-photographer of KATKA'S REINETTE APPLES, Andrei Moskvin (February 14, 1901 - February 28, 1961), was one of them. In his early days he was a member of the experimental FEKS (Factory of the Eccentric Actor) originated by Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg, whose theories he shared. For this group he photographed THE DEVIL'S WHEEL, 1926 (to be shown on November 1 at 3:00 and November 6 at 5:30), THE CLOAK, 1926 (to be shown on November 2 at 5:30), S.V.D., 1927 (to be shown on November 1 at 5:30 and November 3 at 2:00), THE NEW BABYLON (NOVI VAVILON), 1929, and ALONE (ODNA), 1931. Reversing his theories, most likely because of official condemnation of experimentation and the introduction of "socialist realism," he later adopted a more realistic approach to filming, as did Kozintsev and Trauberg, for whom he photographed the Maxim trilogy: THE YOUTH OF MAXIM (YUNOST MAXIMA), 1935, THE RETURN OF MAXIM (VOZVRASHCHENIYE MAKSIMA), 1937, and THE VYBORG SIDE (VYBORGSKAYA STORONA), 1939 (previously shown at the Museum). His most notable achievement of this period is Eisenstein's IVAN THE TERRIBLE (IVAN GROZNY), Parts I (1944) and II (1946; released 1958), for which he photographed the interiors. Especially outstanding is the color sequence in Part II. (A Russian print of IVAN was shown on September 26 at 5:30 and September 27 at noon).

Ermler's early silent films owe a large debt to the acting of Nikitin (b. May 3, 1900 --), who plays Vadka, the intellectual gone to seed, in KATKA'S REINETTE APPLES and the deaf-mute in THE PARISIAN COBBLER. A noted stage actor, Nikitin began his theatrical career in 1917, his screen career in 1926, with KATKA'S REINETTE APPLES. Three more Ermler films followed: HOUSE IN THE SNOWDRIFTS, 1927, THE PARISIAN COBBLER, and FRAGMENT OF AN EMPIRE, 1929 (shown intermittently), in which he created his most famous role, the man who lost his memory. He played (mostly supporting roles) in many other films, too numerous to list. None is outstanding. The best known are LONE WHITE SAIL (BELEYET PARUS ODINOKY), 1937, directed by Vladimir Legoshin, ACADEMICIAN IVAN PAVLOV (AKADEMIK IVAN PAVLOV), 1949, and MUSSORGSKY, 1951, both directed by Grigori Roshal. He was still acting in 1968.

Sonia Volochova