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THE GENERAL LINE

USSR 1929. Directed by Sergei M. Eisenstein and Grigori Alexandrov. Photographed by Eduard Tissé. With Martha Lapkinov, M. Ivanin, Vasya Buzenkov. Originally intended for Russian audiences only, this film is a study of the conflict between the old and the new type of farming, the struggle between the peasants with their small-holdings and their lack of capital and equipment, and the vigorous policy of the new Soviet society with its co-operative farming and mechanised techniques. The cast was entirely non-professional; the peasant girl who is the central figure of the story had been a farm labourer from the age of nine and got the part after going along with others to watch the filming of some of the earlier scenes. Filming began in 1926, was interrupted in 1927 in order that Eisenstein could make the anniversary film **October**, and was completed in 1929. At this time he was particularly interested in the expression of ideas through images and in the elaboration of his montage theory. The material is of the simplest kind – peasants praying for rain, the working of a milk separator, a wheat-cutting contest, the introduction to the farm of a motor-tractor. But as in the case of Eisenstein's other work, the treatment is complex and brilliant, repaying the most extensive analysis.

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