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Pravda series. The upshot of this polemic was that Kultkino, before its absorption into the newly organized Sovkino (uniting the Moscow and Leningrad studios) gave Vertov the opportunity he was waiting for: the right to supervise every shot of a full-length film made in the Kino-Eye method. As succeeding events proved, this encouragement of Vertov's theories assisted the liquidation only of those same pre-revolutionary concepts of film-making that Kuleshov in his way was also attacking.

For this first full-scale demonstration of his theories, Vertov produced the first of a series that was itself called *Kino-Eye*. His plan for this first of a series* was to cover the following kinds of material: '(1) the new and the old, (2) children and adults, (3) the co-operative and the open market, (4) city and country, (5) the theme of bread, (6) the theme of meat, and (7) a large theme in which bootlegging, gambling, drinking, cheating, drugs, tuberculosis, madness, death, were shown as contrasted with health and courage.'⁹ Working on a grand scale, sending organized expeditions to every part of Moscow and the vicinity, displaying the concentration of an inventor who has been given the chance to prove the value of his invention, Vertov with his brother and chief cameraman, Mikhail Kaufman, lived in a Pioneer camp, visited markets with concealed cameras, rode with ambulances to accidents, spied on criminals from behind windows, haunted the doors of beer-parlours, danced with rejoicing collective farmers—neglecting no technical device then known to camera work in order to transfer a sense of actual life onto a moving-picture screen. In speaking of their filming and editing devices, Osip Brik, holding up *Kino-Eye* as a model for all Soviet film production to follow, wrote: 'It is necessary to get out of the limited circle of ordinary human vision; reality must be recorded not by imitating it, but by broadening the range ordinarily encompassed by the human eye.'¹⁰

Marshalling his method against all other methods of film production in use at that time, Vertov pointed out that while the montage, or editing of 'artistic' films meant only the putting together of separate strips of film according to the scenario, his understanding of montage was 'the organization of the seen world', thus:

- '1 Montage during the observation period (immediate orientation of the naked eye at all times and places).
- 2 Montage after observation (logical organization of vision into one or another definite direction).
- 3 Montage at the time of filming (orientation of the *armed* eye—the moving picture camera—during the search for the appropriate camera-position, and adjustment to the several changing conditions of filming).
- 4 Montage after filming (rough organization of the filmed material according to main indications, and ascertaining what necessary shots are missing).
- 5 Judgment of the montage pieces (immediate orientation to link certain juxtapositions, employing exceptional alertness and these military rules: judgment—speed—attack).

* There was no second, for in his following work, Vertov decided to apply the method to large single themes.

- 6 Final montage (exposition of larger themes through a series of smaller subtler themes; reorganization of all material while keeping the rounded sequence in mind; exposure of the very heart of all your film-objects).¹¹

Two shorter films, *Leninist Film-Truth* and *October Without Ilyich*, both of them finished and issued in January 1925, should be mentioned here, because they introduce a far from objective and apparently non-Kino-Eye pathos that was afterwards to be laid aside until 1932 when Vertov made his *Three Songs of Lenin*. This later film not only revives the forgotten pathos of the earlier films, but recovers the themes and methods used in 1924, expanding these to further breadth of material and depth of emotion. *Leninist Film-Truth* (issued as No. 21 of the series *Kino-Pravda*) uses a main structure of Lenin's funeral, developing from it parallel sequences of sorrowing peoples, and followed by a paean of pride in the accomplishment of Lenin's directives—in industry, in agriculture, in culture, in social life. *October Without Ilyich* has much the same Mayakovskian quality, using the annual celebration of the October Revolution as a base upon which to build both memories of Lenin's life and funeral, and to show his inspiration continuing after his death. As anyone will realize who has seen *Three Songs of Lenin*, this approach is almost identical, but none of his work between the two dates, as we shall see later, attempted this successful synthesis of fact and emotion.

Today it appears that Vertov's early bloodthirsty manifestos overstated the actual situation when they assumed that certain failures in the Soviet cinema of that time indicated a disease of the entire dramatic film. The fact was that the work he based upon the manifestos not only materially assisted the eradication of pre-revolutionary technique from the Soviet cinema, but also acted as a *conscience* throughout succeeding film history. While most films produced at that time approached revolutionary subject-matter of the past with attitudes strongly influenced by the cheapest theatrical and adventure-film traditions, both in selection and in method, Vertov's films dared to treat the present and, through the present, the future, with an approach as revolutionary as the material he treated. Willingly or not, Vertov gave new strength to his fictitious 'enemy'—the acted film.

Both in Moscow and in Leningrad, this period marks the entrance of complete newcomers into the Soviet cinema, who by their first works in it were to affect it radically. In December 1921, the city of Petrograd had been no wise rocked to its foundations by the manifestos and public declarations of a group of young stage actors and directors who claimed that they had discovered a means to reform the entire socialist theatre—to be founded on principles derived from the circus and vaudeville.* In the face of an utter lack of interest on the part of critics and theatre-people, the young group announced the formation of the Factory of the Eccentric Actor—or FEX, and until 1924 defied critics and tradition alike by their unconventional productions. One critic foamed when they 'soiled' Gogol's *Marriage* with a production that employed some film sequences. But the directors

* Their first manifesto quoted Mark Twain, 'It is better to be a young June-bug than an old bird of paradise.'

Fragments drum on the roof of the car where we are hiding. They reach as far as an opened tomb, where a Scythian has lain for 2,000 years. Alongside the skeleton are spears, bronze-tipped arrows, with slots for poison. A broken pottery cup. At the head are the bones of a sheep (eaten) and the skeleton of a war-horse. The Scythian looks with hollow eyes, black openings in his skull. As if waiting for the explosion. Sky over him. And clouds. Rails go right through the tomb. Waiting on the rails are 40-ton cranes and loaded freight-cars. . . .

'Scythian in tomb and the crash of advancing new life.'

*'Scythian in tomb and a cameraman, focussing on a 2,000-year silence!'*⁶

Such intuitive simple sensuality did not control the completion of the film. In Eisenstein's comment, the metric beat of its montage was 'mathematically so complex that it is only "with a ruler" that one can discover the proportional law that governs it'.⁷ A European critic has characterized this period of Vertov's work:

*'Theorists mostly love their theories more than fathers love an only child. . . . Vertov, also, has waged fierce, vehement and desperate battles with his material and his instruments (i.e. reality and the film camera) to give practical proofs of his ideas. In this he has failed. He had failed already in the era of the silent film—by showing hundreds of examples of most cunning artistry in turning: acrobatic masterpieces of optic jigsaw, brilliant conjuring of filmic association—but never a rounded work, never a clear, proceeding line. His great efforts of strength in relation to detail did not leave him breath for the whole. His arabesques totally covered the ground plan, his fugues destroyed every melody.'*⁸

These harsh words are most applicable to Vertov's most brilliant film, his next.

My memory of *The Man with the Movie Camera* is not reliable; I have not seen it since it happened to be, in New York in 1930, the first Soviet film I saw. It was such a dazzling experience that it took two or three other Soviet films with normal 'stories' to convince me that all Soviet films were not compounded of such intricate camera pyrotechnics. But I hope to be forgiven for not bringing away any very clear critical idea as I reeled out of the Eighth Street Playhouse—I was even too stunned to sit through it again. The apparent purpose of the film was to show the breadth and precision of the camera's recording ability. But Vertov and his cameraman-brother, Mikhail Kaufman, were not content to show any simple vocabulary of film-practice; the cameraman is made an heroic participant in the currents of Soviet life. He and his methods are treated by Vertov in his most fluid montage style, establishing large patterns of sequences: the structure resembles that of *Kino-Eye*, with a succession of 'themes'—the audience, the working day, marriage-birth-death, recreation—each with a whirling, galloping climax, but the execution of the two films, separated by less than five years, are worlds apart. The camera observation in *Kino-Eye* was alert, surprising, but never eccentric. Things and actions were 'caught', but less for the catching's sake than for the close observation of the things themselves. In *The Man with the Movie Camera* all the stunts that can be performed by a cameraman armed with Debie or hand-camera, and by a film-cutter armed with the boldness of Vertov and

- Interplanetary Revolution** (Mezhplanetnaya revoliutsiya). 350 m., Animation Workshop 18 Aug.
Des.: E. Komissarenko, Y. Merkulov, N. Khodatayev; *phot.*: V. Alexeyev.
- Aelita**. 1,841 m., Mezhrabpom-Russ 25 Sep.
Scen. (from novel by Alexei Tolstoy): Fyodor Otsep, Alexei Faiko; *dir.*: Yakov Protazanov; *phot.*: Yuri Zhelyabuzhsky, E. Schöneman; *des.*: Sergei Kozlovsky, Alexandra Exter, Isaac Rabinovich, Victor Simov.
Cast: Valentina Kuinzhi, Nikolai Tseretelli, Konstantin Eggert, Yulia Solntseva, Yuri Zavadsky, Igor Ilinsky, Nikolai Batalov.
- From Sparks—Flames** (Iz iskry plamy). 9,200 m., in six parts, Proletkino
Scen. & Dir.: Dmitri Bassaligo; *phot.*: Vladimir Dobrozhansky; *des.*: Y. Ivanov-Barkov.
Cast: Olga Tretyakova, G. Levkoyev.
- Kino-Eye** (Kino-glaz). 1,627 m., Goskino 31 Oct.
~~*Scen. & dir.*: Dziga Vertov; *phot.*: Mikhail Kaufman; *ed.*: Yelizaveta Svilova.~~
- Cigarette-Girl from Mosselprom** (Papirosnitsa ot Mosselproma). 2,325 m., Mezhrabpom Russ 2 Dec.
Scen.: Alexei Faiko; *dir. & phot.*: Yuri Zhelyabuzhsky; *des.*: Sergei Kozlovsky, Vladimir Balliuzek.
Cast: Yulia Solntseva, Igor Ilinsky, Anna Dmokhovskaya, Nikolai Tseretelli, L. Baratov, M. Tsibulsky, Galina Kravchenko, Naum Rogozhin, N. Vishnyak, Mikhail Zharov.
- Abortion** (Abort). 1,714 m., Kultkino 2 Dec.
Scen.: Noah Galkin; *dir.*: Grigori Lemberg, Galkin; *phot.*: Lemberg.
Cast: Liliyeva.
- Adventures of Oktyabrina** (Pokhozdeniya Oktyabrini). 970 m., Sevzapkino & FEX 9 Dec.
Scen. & dir.: Grigori Kozintsev, Leonid Trauberg; *phot.*: F. Verigo-Darovsky, Ivan Frolov; *des.*: Vladimir Yegorov.
Cast: Z. Tarkhovskaya, Sergei Martinson (Poincaré).
- 1925**
- Leninist Film-truth** (Leninskaya kinopravda). 755 m., Kultkino 22 Jan.
Dir.: Dziga Vertov; *phot.*: Mikhail Kaufman; *ed.*: Yelizaveta Svilova.
- His Call** (Yevo prizyv) [in us: Broken Chains]. 1,700 m., Mezhrabpom-Russ 17 Feb.
Scen.: Vera Eri; *dir.*: Yakov Protazanov; *phot.*: Louis Forestier; *des.*: Vladimir Yegorov.
Cast: Anatoli Ktorov, V. Popova, Maria Blumenthal-Tamarina, Ivan Koval-Samborsky.
- The Death Ray** (Luch smerti). 2,995 m., Goskino 16 Mar.
Scen.: Vsevolod Pudovkin; *dir.*: Lev Kuleshov; *asst.*: Pudovkin, Alexandra Khokhlova, Sergei Komarov, Leonid Obolensky; *phot.*: Alexander Levitsky; *des.*: Pudovkin, Vasili Rakhals.
Cast: Komarov, Porfiri Podobed, Vladimir Fogel, Khokhlova, Pyotr Galadzhev, Obolensky, Pudovkin.
- Stepan Khalturin**. 2,000 m., Sevzapkino 7 Apr.
Scen.: Pavel Shchegolev; *dir.*: Alexander Ivanovsky; *phot.*: Ivan Frolov, F. Verigo-Darovsky; *des.*: Alexander Utkin, Vladimir Yegorov.
Cast: Anatoli Morozov, Angelo Raupenas, A. Sysoyev, N. Schmidthof, Valentina Kuinzhi, Y. Boronikhin, Konstantin Khokhlov, Yelena Korchagina-Alexandrovskaya.