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## THE (FALL OF THE ROMANOV DYNASTY

by Esther Shub

Thursday, September 25, 1986

The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty by Esther Shub is in B&W, running for 101 minutes, 18 fps, silent, with English intertitles.

This is the premier example of the compilation film, assembled from earlier footage and often without new material. Sponsored for the tenth anniversary of the 1917 Revolution, The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty is one of the most engrossing reenactments of history, covering Czarist Russia from 1912 through World War I and the revolutions of February and October 1917. Its maker, Esther Shub, had years of experience as a film editor on a variety of fictional works, but developed a greater interest in documentary. Potemkin's account of the 1905 Revolution reputedly inspired her to make a history film of her own, but one that would utilize actual film records of events. She located newsreels of the pre-revolutionary period, and, after a successful struggle to obtain production approval, uncovered home movies of Czar Nicholas II taken by the court cinematographer. By her positioning of regal celebrations, boating parties, croquet and tennis games adjacent to contemporary strikes, breadlines, arrests, munitions factories, and war, and with the use of pointed intertitles, Shub reaffirmed Kuleshov's principle of imbuing each shot with new meaning by dialectical montage. Her heirs in the compilation genre, including Frank Capra in the Why We Fight propaganda series (1942-45), would profit by Shub's example. She followed The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty with corresponding films on the periods 1917-27 and 1896-1912 to form a trilogy.

- Museum of Modern Art's "Circulating Film Library Catalog."

Esther Shub: "This and my following two films filled three years with the joy of searching, finding, "opening" historical film-documents - but not in film-libraries or archives, for there were no such things then. In the damp cellars of Goskino, in "Kino Moskva", in the Museum of the Revolution lay boxes of negatives and random prints, and no one knew how they had got there."

- from "Kino - A History of the Russian and Soviet Film" by Jay Leyda.

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