

The Factory of Facts and Other Writings

DZIGA VERTOV

translated by KEVIN O'BRIAN

On the Film *Kino-Glaz*¹

The world's first attempt to create a film-object without the participation of actors, artists, directors; without using a studio, sets, costumes. All members of the cast continue doing what they usually do in life.

The present film represents an assault on our reality by movie cameras, and prepares the theme of creative labor against a background of class contradictions and of everyday life. In revealing the origins of objects and of bread, the movie camera makes it possible for every worker to acquire the conviction, through evidence, that he, the worker, creates all these things himself, and that consequently they belong to him.

In undressing a flirtatious bourgeoisie and a bloated bourgeois, and in returning food and objects to the workers and peasants who've made them, we are giving millions of laborers the opportunity to see the truth and to question the need to dress and feed a caste of parasites.

If this experiment succeeds, the picture, while independent (in both its content and formal exploration), will serve as a prologue to the international film, *Workers of the World, Unite!* The spade work for the creation of this film is presently being done under the Council of Three—the supreme organ of the *kinoks*. The Council of Three,² basing itself politically on the communist

1. *Kino-Glaz* (*Cinema-Eye*) is the title Vertov gives to a series of short newsreel films begun in 1922, as well as his name for the feature-length film of 1924 which culminates the early works' development and initiates his mature period. Moreover Vertov employs this term to designate the movement and cinematic style of which he is the founder and leader. In order to avoid possible confusion we have retained the Russian "*Kino-Glaz*" to designate only the 1924 feature; "*Kino-Eye*" refers here to the 1922-24 newsreels; and "cinema-eye" is used generically to refer to the style.

2. The Council of Three was a policy-making group formed within that of the *Kinoks*, Vertov's staff of collaborators. The Council articulated and stressed Vertov's project through public statements and manifestoes. The group is generally assumed to have been composed of Vertov, Mikhail Kaufman, his cameraman, and Elizaveta Svilova, Vertov's editor. Georges Sadoul, in his *Histoire générale du cinéma* (L'Art Muet, vol. 5, Editions Denoel, Paris, 1975), lists, in addition, the painter Beliaev, with Vertov presumably presiding ex officio.

Dziga Vertov. A Sixth of the World. 1926.



program, is striving to instill cinema with the fundamental ideas of Leninism and to invest their extremely profound content not in the grimaces of actors, more or less successful as they may be, but in the labor and thoughts of the working class itself.

The experiment is made difficult by our technical backwardness. Unequipped technically, but relying upon the hard experimentation of nineteen *Kino-Pravdas*,³ we nevertheless hope, beginning with this first work, to open the eyes of the masses to the connection (not one of kisses or detectives) between the social and visual phenomena interpreted by the movie camera.

Proceeding from the material⁴ to the film-object (and not from the film-object to the material), the *kinoks* consider it wrong, in beginning work, to present a so-called scenario. In the years to come, the scenario, as a product of literary composition, will completely disappear.

Allowing, however, for possible reservations on the part of Goskino⁵ or Narkompros⁶ as to our ability to construct a film-object correct in ideology and

3. *Kino-Pravda* was a film journal conceived and directed by Vertov, named after the newspaper founded by Lenin. Each edition treated two or three subjects. Initiated in June 1922, it reached a total of 23 issues before its disappearance in 1925. It is beginning with this series that Vertov's theoretical position begins to become known.

4. A term frequently used by Vertov and others to mean film footage. Its constructivist connotation is especially significant with respect to Vertov's theory and practice.

5. Created in December 1922, the Goskino was the production agency of the state cinema policy. The Gosprokat, the state rental agency which was given the monopoly of distribution throughout the U.S.S.R., was a branch of Goskino. In February 1923, Goskino's industrial and commercial activities were put under the control of the State Economic Council and its cultural activities were retained by the People's Commissariat of Education.

6. Narkompros, the People's Commissariat of Education, was created by the Central Committee of the Bolshevik party in October 1917. It was charged with the enormous task of reorganizing education according to socialist methods and aims and also served as mediator between the regime and the nation's intellectuals. Anatoly Lunacharsky was the first and most distinguished Commissar of Education.



technique without a previously approved scenario, I enclose, with this memorandum, a sketch of the movie cameras' offensive and an approximate list of characters and places.

1923

The Factory of Facts (By way of proposal)

After five years of stubborn prospecting, the cinema-eye method has now won a total victory in the field of nonacted film (cf., *Kino-Eye's First Reconnaissance [Mission]*, *Leninist Kino-Pravda*, *Forward, Soviet!*, and *A Sixth of the World*, now in release).

Right now—as the experience of the past year shows—the simple adoption of a single external mannerism of cinema-eye by the so-called artistic film (the acted film, the film with actors), is enough to create a big stir (*Strike, Potemkin*) in that area as well.

We see the varying ways in which the cinema-eye method is already forcing the “acted,” the “actor-based” film out of cinema. The increasing adoption of cinema-eye’s external manner by the “acted” film (*Strike* and *Potemkin*) is only an isolated incident, a chance reflection of the ever-growing cinema-eye movement. I will not go into it at this moment. How soon, in what way, at the price of what disillusionments the proletarian viewer will gradually come to realize the impossibility of saving the decrepit and degenerate “actor-based” film, even with the regular injection of certain cinema-eye elements—that question belongs to the future.

The topic for the present, for today is, however, the issue, raised by Comrade Fevralsky in his timely article in *Pravda* (June 15) of a single *center* for the work and workers of cinema-eye, the issue of a firm basis for cinema-eye work.

Comrade Fevralsky is absolutely right when he speaks of the necessity for *immediate centralization* of all types of nontheatrical, nonacted film.

The newsreel storehouses, the production of Soviet film magazines, of *Kino-Pravda*, major animation studios, the production of cinema-eye films, the reediting and correction of foreign "cultural films," and finally, the production of hits without actors such as *A Sixth of the World*—all this ought to be concentrated in a single place and not (as currently) scattered through all the sections, all the buildings of Goskino-Sovkino.⁷

All of nonacted film in a single place, together with a film lab, together with a vault for nonacted films.

Our view is as follows:

Parallel to the united film factory of grimaces (the union of all types of cinema-theatrical work, from Sabinsky to Eisenstein) should be formed a

FILM-FACTORY OF FACTS

(the union of all types of cinema-eye work, from current flash-newsreels to scientific films, from thematic *Kino-Pravdas* to stirring revolutionary film marathon runs.

Once again:

Not FEKS⁸ and not Eisenstein's "factory of attractions,"⁹ neither the factory of kisses and doves (their type of director has not yet died out), nor the factory of death (*The Minaret of Death*, *Death Bay*, *Tripoli Tragedy*, etc.).

Simply:

the FACTORY OF FACTS.

Filming facts. Sorting facts. Disseminating facts. Agitating with facts. Propaganda with facts. Fists made of facts.

Lightning bolts of facts!

7. Founded in December 1924, on the basis of the existing Goskino (see above), Sovkino, under the chairmanship of Konstantin Chvedtchikov, was given the exclusive right to purchase film and foreign equipment and to export Soviet film. This agency played a major role in the expansion of the Soviet film industry from 1925 on, that is to say, in the period of its maturity, which coincides with that of Vertov.

8. FEKS (*Fabrika eksentricheskogo aktera*, The Factory of the Eccentric Actor) was the name of a group of young theater and film artists formed in Leningrad in 1922. According to Grigori Kozintsev, one of its leading exponents, it was "a laboratory in which, through an original alliance of 'left' art (mainly Meyerhold and Mayakovsky) and the filmic practice of Chaplin, Griffith, Mack Sennett, Stroheim, was formed a system of cinema acting style Kabuki, black theater, circus and a rejection of naturalism composed its basis," and, one might add, that of a number of other innovative theatrical styles of that period in the U.S.S.R. and elsewhere. Among the films produced by the members of the group was a version of Gogol's *The Cloak* (1926).

9. Vertov is obviously referring to the theory of "the montage of attractions," formulated in Eisenstein's first published text (in *Lef*, 1923). Eisenstein speaks of the basic cinematic unit as the "shock" that "make(s) the final ideological conclusion perceptible. This is fully analogous with the 'pictorial storehouse' employed by George Grosz, or the elements of photographic illustration (photomontage) employed by Rodchenko." In Sergei Eisenstein, "Montage of attractions," Appendix II, *The Film Sense*, trans. and ed. by Jay Leyda, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.

Mountains of facts.
Hurricanes of facts.
And separate little factlets.
Against cinema-sorcery.
Against cinema-mystification.
For the genuine cinematization of the worker-peasant U.S.S.R.

1926

Cinema-Eye

A Drawing in the Journal Lapot'

A Poster. Showing little flowers. Telegraph poles. Petals. Little birds. A sickle. An operatic, curly-headed peasant with a sheaf of rye is theatrically shaking the hand of a sugary worker, hammer on shoulder and a roll of calico under his arm. The sun is rising. Beneath that is written: "The Union of Town and Country."

It's a poster meant for the countryside. Two peasants are standing in front of it:

"Come and see what union is like, Uncle Ivan. There. But what's it like for us?! They've brought two plows, and newspapers . . . and that's it . . ."

"Be quiet and use your head! Think that's a real union? Those are actors putting it on in a theater."

This drawing in the journal *Lapot'* reminds me of the peasants' attitude toward the depictions on the painted agit-trains of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (1919-21).

Horse-"Actors"

The peasants called "actors" not only the Cossacks that had been daubed on the walls of the train cars, but also the horses depicted there, simply because in the drawing they were incorrectly shod.

The more remote the place, the less the peasants grasped the general, urgently propagandistic sense of the drawings. They'd carefully look over each drawing, each figure individually. They'd answer my questions as to whether they like the drawings or not: "We don't know, we're ignorant and uneducated people."

That didn't prevent the peasants from talking among themselves, however, and laughing at the "actor"-horses.

A Film Showing in the Country

1920.

I'm in charge of a cinema-train. We're showing films at a remote station.

There's a film drama on the screen. The whites and the reds. The whites are drinking, dancing, and kissing half-naked women; during the interludes they shoot red prisoners. The reds underground. The reds at the front. The reds fighting. The reds win and put all the drunken whites and their women in prison.

The content's good, but why should anyone want to show film-dramas based on the same old cliché for five years now?

The viewers, illiterate and uneducated peasants, don't read the subtitles. They can't grasp the content of the thing. They examine individual details, such as the drawings on the decorated train.

Coolness and distrust.

These viewers, still unspoiled, do not understand the artifices of theatricality. A "lady" remains for them a lady, no matter what "peasant clothing" you show her in. These viewers are seeing the movie screen for the first or second time; they still do not understand the taste of film-moonshine; and when, after the sugary actors of a film-drama, real peasants appear on the screen, they all perk up and stare at the screen.

A real tractor, of which they know only from hearsay, has gone over a few acres and plowed them in a few minutes, before the viewers' very eyes. Conversations, shouts, questions. There's not a word about the actors. On the screen are their own kind, real people. There isn't a single false, theatrical movement to unmask the screen, to deprive it of the peasants' confidence.

This sharp division between the perceptions of film drama and of newsreel has been noted anywhere cinema was being shown for the first, second, or third time—anywhere the poison hadn't yet penetrated, where the need for the toxic sweetness of artistic dramas, of kisses, sighs, and murder hadn't yet set in.

*Petrushka*¹⁰ or *Life*

It was at the time when only the outlines of the cinema-eye movement were visible, when we had to decide whether to march in step with artistic cinema and with the whole brotherhood of directors who produce film-vodka—a legal and profitable business—or declare war on art films and begin to build cinema anew.

"*Petrushka* or life?" we asked the viewers.

"*Petrushka*," answered those who were hopelessly infected. "We already know life; we don't need life. Hide life, boring life, from us."

"Life," answered the viewers who were uninfected or not yet hopelessly infected. "We don't know life. We haven't seen life. We know our country village and the ten versts around it. Show us life."

1926

10. *Petrushka* is the Punch of the Russian puppet theater.

Provisional Instructions to Cinema-Eye Groups

I. Introduction

Our eye sees very poorly and very little—and so men conceived of the microscope in order to see invisible phenomena; and they discovered the telescope in order to see and explore distant, unknown worlds. The movie camera was invented in order to penetrate deeper into the visible world, to explore and record visual phenomena, so that we not forget what happens and what the future must take into account.

But the movie camera experienced a misfortune. It was invented at a time when there was no single country in which Capital was not in power. The bourgeoisie's hellish idea consisted of using the new toy to entertain the masses, or rather to divert the workers' attention from their basic aim: the struggle against their masters. Under the electric narcotic of the movie theaters, the proletariat, more or less starving, jobless, unclenched its iron fist and unknowingly submitted to the corrupting influence of the masters' cinema. The theater is expensive and seats are few. And so the masters force the movie camera to disseminate theatrical productions which show us how the bourgeoisie love, how they suffer, how they "care for" their workers, and how these higher beings, the aristocracy, differ from lower ones (workers, peasants, etc.).

In prerevolutionary Russia the masters' cinema played the same role. After the October Revolution the cinema was faced with the difficult task of adapting itself to the new life. Actors who had played tsarist civil servants began to play workers; those who had played ladies of the court are now grimacing in Soviet style. Few of us yet realize, however, that all this grimacing remains, in many respects, within the framework of bourgeois technique and theatrical form. We know many enemies of the contemporary theater who are at the same time passionate admirers of cinema in its present form.

Few people see clearly as yet that nontheatrical cinema (with the exception of newsreel and some scientific films) does not exist.

Every theatrical presentation, every motion picture is constructed in exactly the same way: a playwright or scriptwriter, then a director or film director, then actors, rehearsals, sets, and the presentation to the public. The essential thing in theater is acting, and so *every motion picture constructed upon a scenario and acting is a theatrical presentation*, and that is why there are no differences between the productions by directors of different nuances.

All of this, both in whole and in part, applies to theater regardless of its trend and direction, regardless of its relationship to theater as such. *All of this lies outside the genuine purpose of the movie camera—the exploration of the phenomena of life.*

Kino-Pravda has clearly shown that *it is possible to work outside theater and in step with the revolution. Cinema-eye is continuing the work, begun by Kino-Pravda, of creating Red Soviet cinematography.*

II. *The Work of Cinema-Eye*

On the basis of reports by film-observers a plan for the orientation and offensive of the movie camera in life's ever-changing environment is being worked out by the Council of Cinema-Eye. The work of the movie camera is reminiscent of the work of the agents of the G.P.U. who do not know what lies ahead, but have a definite assignment: to separate out and bring to light a particular issue, a particular affair.

a) The *kinok*-observer watches closely the environment and the people around him, and tries to connect separate, isolated phenomena according to generalized or distinctive characteristics. The *kinok*-observer is assigned a theme by the leader.

b) The group leader or cinema-[reconnaissance] scout distributes themes to the observers, and in the beginning helps each observer to summarize his observations. When the leader has collected all the summaries, he in turn classifies them, and rearranges the individual data until a sufficiently clear construction of the theme is achieved.

Themes for initial observation can be split roughly into three categories:

1) *Observation of a place* (for example, a village reading-room, a cooperative).



Mikhail Kaufman, Vertov's brother and cameraman.

2) *Observation of a person or object in motion* (examples: your father, a Young Pioneer,¹¹ a postman, a streetcar, etc.).

3) *Observation of a theme independent of a particular person or place* (examples: water, bread, footwear, fathers and children, city and country, tears, laughter, etc.).

The group leader must teach them to use a camera (later, a movie camera) in order to photograph the more striking moments of observation for a bulletin-board or mural newspaper.

A bulletin-board newspaper is issued monthly or every two weeks and uses photographs to illustrate the life of a factory, plant, or village; it participates in campaigns; reveals surrounding life as fully as possible; agitates, propagandizes, and organizes. The group leader submits his work to approval by the Goskino cell of the Red *kinoks* and is under the immediate supervision of the Cinema-Eye Council.

c) The *Cinema-Eye Council* heads the entire organization. It is made up of one representative from each group of *kinok*-observers, one representative of the unorganized *kinoks*, and, provisionally, three representatives of the *kinok* production workers.

In its practical, everyday work the Cinema-Eye Council relies upon a technical staff—the Goskino cell of Red *kinoks*.

The Goskino *kinoks*' cell should be regarded as one of the factories in which the raw material supplied by *kinok*-observers is made into film-objects.

The Goskino *kinoks*' cell should also be regarded as an educational, model workshop through which Young Pioneer and Komsomol film groups will be drawn into production work.

Specifically, all groups of *kinok*-observers will be drawn into the production of future cinema-eye series. They will be the author-creators of all subsequent film-objects.

This departure from authorship by one person or a group of persons to mass authorship will, in our view, accelerate the destruction of bourgeois, artistic cinema.

III. Very Simple Slogans

- 1) Film-drama is the opium of the people.
- 2) Down with the immortal kings and queens of the screen! Long live the ordinary mortal, filmed in life at his daily tasks.
- 3) Down with the bourgeois fairytale script! Long live life as it is.

11. The Young Pioneers were established by the 5th Komsomol Congress in 1922 for children between the ages of 10 and 14. The organization stressed collective action rather than individual incentive and competition. Its members play a leading role in Vertov's *Kino-Glaz* of 1924, in which the children are active in price control, the anti-alcoholic campaign, and in other aspects of public education.

4) Film-drama and religion are deadly weapons in the hands of the capitalists. By showing our revolutionary way of life, we will wrest that weapon from the enemy's hands.

5) The contemporary artistic drama is a survival of the old world. It is an attempt to pour our revolutionary reality into bourgeois molds.

6) Down with the staging of everyday life! Film us on the spot, as we are.

7) The scenario is a fairytale invented for us by some writer. We live our own lives and we do not submit to anyone's fictions.

8) Each of us does his task in life and does not prevent anyone else from working. The film workers' task is to film us in such a way as not to interfere with our work.

9) Long live the cinema-eye of the proletarian revolution!

IV. *The Kinoks and Editing*

By editing, artistic cinema usually means the *splicing together of individual filmed scenes* according to a scenario, worked out to a greater or lesser extent by the director.

The *kinoks* attribute a completely different significance to editing and regard it as the *organization of the visible world*.

The *kinoks* distinguish between:

1) *Editing during the time of observation*—the orienting of the unaided eye at any place, any time.

2) *Editing after the time of observation*—the mental organization of what has been seen, according to characteristic features.

3) *Editing during filming*—orienting of the aided eye of the movie camera in the place inspected in step 1. Adjusting for the somewhat changed conditions for filming.

4) *Editing after filming*—the rough organization of the footage according to characteristic features. Looking for the montage fragments that are lacking.

5) *Gauging by sight (hunting for montage fragments)*—instantaneous orienting in any visual environment so as to capture the essential link shots. Exceptional attentiveness. A military rule: gauging by sight, speed, attack.

6) *The final editing*—revealing small, concealed themes together with the big ones. The reorganization of all the footage into the best sequence. Bringing out the core of the film-object. Coordinating similar elements, and finally, the numerical calculation of the montage groupings.

When filming under conditions which do not permit preliminary observation—as in shadowing with a movie camera or filming unobserved—the first two steps drop away and the third or fifth step comes to the fore.

When filming short moments, or given rush filming, the combining of several steps is possible.

In all other instances, when filming one or several themes, all the steps are

carried out and the editing is uninterrupted, *beginning with the initial observation and ending with the finished film-object.*

V. *The Kinoks and the Scenario*

It is entirely apropos to mention the scenario here. Once added to the above mentioned editing system, a literary scenario immediately cancels its meaning and significance. Because our objects are constructed by editing, by the organization of footage of everyday life, unlike artistic dramas which are constructed by the writer's pen.

Does this mean that we work haphazardly, without thought or plan? Nothing of the kind.

If, however, we compare our *preliminary plan* to the plan of a commission that sets out, let us say, to investigate the living quarters of the unemployed, then we must compare the scenario to a short story of that investigation *written before* the investigation has taken place.

How do artistic cinema and the *kinoks* each proceed in the present case?

The *kinoks* organize a film-object on the basis of the factual film-data of the investigation.

After polishing up a scenario, *film directors* will shoot some entertaining film-illustrations to go with it: a couple of kisses, a few tears, a murder, moonlit clouds rushing above, and a dove. At the end they write "Long live . . . !" and it all ends with the "International."

Such, with minor changes, are all film-art-agitdramas.

When a picture ends with the "International," the censors usually pass it, but the viewers always feel a bit uneasy hearing the proletarian hymn in such a bourgeois context.

A scenario is the invention of an individual or a group of people; it is a short story which these people desire to transfer to the screen.

We do not consider this desire criminal, but presenting this sort of work as cinema's main objective, ousting real film-objects with these little film short stories, and suppressing all the movie camera's remarkable possibilities in worship of the god of art-drama—this we cannot understand, and do not, of course, accept.

We have not come to cinema in order to feed fairytales to the NEPmen and NEPwomen¹² lounging in the loges of our first-class movie theaters.

We are not tearing down artistic cinema in order to soothe and amuse the consciousness of the working masses with new rattles.

We have come to serve a particular class, the workers and peasants not yet caught in the sweet web of art-dramas.

12. NEP stands for New Economic Policy and refers to independent merchants and manufacturers who were seen as "bourgeois" and often accused of profiteering.

We have come to show the world as it is, and to explain to the worker the bourgeois structure of the world.

We want to bring clarity into the worker's awareness of the phenomena concerning him and surrounding him. To give everyone working behind a plow or a machine the opportunity to see his brothers at work with him simultaneously in different parts of the world, and to see all his enemies, the exploiters.

We are taking our first steps in cinema, and that is why we are called *kinoks*. Existing cinema, as a commercial affair, like cinema as a sphere of art, has nothing in common with our work.

Even in technique we only partially touch so-called artistic cinema, since the goals we have set for ourselves require a different technical approach.

We have absolutely no need of huge studios or massive sets, just as we have no need for "mighty" film directors, "great" actors, and "amazing," photogenic women.

On the other hand, we must have:

- 1) quick means of transport,
- 2) more sensitive film,
- 3) small, lightweight, hand-held cameras,
- 4) lighting equipment that is equally lightweight,
- 5) a staff of lightning-fast film reporters,
- 6) an army of *kinok*-observers.

In our organization we distinguish between:

- 1) *kinok*-observers,
- 2) *kinok*-cameramen,
- 3) *kinok*-constructors [designers],
- 4) *kinok*-editors (women and men),
- 5) *kinok*-lab assistants.

We teach our methods of cinema work only to Komsomols and Young Pioneers and pass on our skill and our technical experience to the rising generation of young workers in whom we place our trust.

We venture to assure both respectable and not-so-respectable film directors that the cinema revolution is only beginning.

We will hold out without yielding a single position until the iron shift of young people eventually arrives, and then, all together, we will advance, over the head of bourgeois art-cinema, to the cinema October of the whole Soviet Union, of the whole world.

VI. Cinema-Eye on Its First Reconnaissance

Part One of the film-object *Life Caught Unawares*

The editing of *Kino-Glaz*, Part One, was done according to the editing scheme set forth in an earlier section of the present article.

In Part One we note the following themes:

- 1) The "new" and the "old."
- 2) Children and grown-ups.
- 3) The cooperative system and the marketplace.
- 4) City and country.
- 5) The theme of bread.
- 6) The theme of meat, and
- 7) A large theme: home-brew—cards—beer—shady business; "Erma-kovka"—cocaine—tuberculosis—madness—death—a theme to which I find it difficult to give a single name, but one which I contrast here with the themes of health and vigor.

It is, if you like, a part of our terrible heritage from the bourgeois system and which our revolution has not yet had the time or the possibility to sweep away.

Along with the montage of themes (their coordination) and of each theme individually, we edited individual moments (the attack on the camp, the call for help, etc.).

I can point to the dancing of the drunken peasant women in the first section of *Kino-Glaz* as an example of a montage moment not limited by time or space.

They were filmed at different times, in different villages, and edited together into a single whole.

The beer house and the market, actually all the rest . . . were also done through montage.

The raising of the flag on the day of the opening of the camp can serve as a model of a montage instant *limited in time and space*.

Here, for a length of seventeen meters, fifty-three moments that have been spliced together go by. Despite the very rapid change of subjects on the screen (one-fourth of a second is the maximum length of time an individual subject is on the screen), the screening of this fragment can be well perceived and does not tire one's vision (as verified with the worker viewer).

On shortcomings of *Kino-Glaz*, Part One

The film's excessive length should be mentioned as its chief shortcoming.

We must not forget that art films were also one- or two-reel in the beginning, and that only gradually was their footage increased.

The field of cinema-eye is a new one, and the portion being served to the viewer should be increased cautiously to avoid tiring him and shoving him into the arms of the art-drama.

Hoping to break into the big movie theaters, we yielded to the demand to provide a six-reel film and . . . made a mistake; this has to be admitted. We must correct this mistake in the future, and make small objects of various types which can be shown individually or in a group program, as desired.



Stills from the flag-raising sequence of Vertov's *Kino-Glaz*, 1924.

The overly broad sweep of Part One, the excessive number of themes interconnected at the expense of the deepening of each single one, can also be considered shortcomings.

This kind of approach to the first part is not coincidental; it was dictated partly by our intention to provide a broad exploration and, on the basis of that exploration, to penetrate deeper into life in the subsequent parts. Such an approach was also partly necessary since more time, artificial lighting, and a lot of animation filming were needed in order to develop completely some of the themes of *Kino-Glaz*.

The expenditure of time meant a greater expenditure of money. The artificial lighting "limped on both legs," while the animation stand was so busy that we had to content ourselves with a ten-meter cartoon and ten illuminated titles.

I mention only these shortcomings—not that there are no others but because we need to give first consideration to precisely the above mentioned defects and mistakes, and to draw appropriate conclusions for future work.

What we lost and what we gained in releasing Part One

We temporarily lost several organizational and technical positions. We had fewer joint meetings, and several members of the group almost left work and disappeared, the central leadership was weakened and the organizational core of it all somehow went out of focus.

At present all these organizational losses have been almost fully repaired.

Of the technical positions which we temporarily ceded, the chief one is animation filming (filming each frame individually). We have done animation filming for a long time, following the first issues of *Kino-Pravda*, and consider it an important weapon in the struggle against artistic cinema.



For practice we shot various things (some were necessary, some were not) by this method: illuminated titles, maps, bulletins, cartoons, advertisements, and so forth.

We always announced at meetings and in the press that what we were doing in this area was only training, mere preparation for a serious departure into another essential area.

When, under the most trying conditions, the *kinoks* spent sleepless nights filming various cartoons, humoresques, etc., they had to be reassured that it would not be long now, that we were just about to begin the real animation work which was in the *kinoks'* plan.

Persistently we prepared the union of newsreel and scientific film in which the animation method was to play a decisive role. "Drawings in motion, blueprints in motion, the theory of relativity on the screen—such was already the direction of the *kinoks'* first manifesto, written at the end of 1919, and before the picture, *The Einstein Theory of Relativity*, was released abroad.¹³

Because we were distracted by work on the first part of *Kino-Glaz*, it turned out that our first scientific picture, *Abortion*, in which the *kinok* Belyakov had a significant part, was joined not with the factual footage in our plan, but with a bad romantic drama of a low order.

As was to be expected, *the union of science with drama did not occur.*

Dramatic footage looks very cheap and colorless beside scientific film. The scientific verity of such a picture is called into question by this sort of "artistic" proximity.

It is clear that if not for work on *Kino-Glaz* we would not have lost this position and would have used this splendid opportunity for creating something competent, healthy, and interesting.

13. *The Einstein Theory of Relativity* (1923), a film with animation by Max Fleischer.

We are not, of course, going to give up this position we've won. *We will continue this work*, either by agreement with the department of scientific film, formed on our technical foundation, or by beginning to build afresh.

Kino-Pravda and the film-calendars have suffered somewhat, but we have already made good 80% of the loss.

The commercial cinema world greeted the first part of *Kino-Glaz* with hostility, to the great joy of directors, actors, and the entire priestly caste. The big movie theaters would not even open their doors to such an "abomination."

The popularity of the slogan "cinema-eye" nevertheless grew and continues to grow. A series of articles devoted to Part One cut its way through the entire party, Soviet, theatrical, and cinema press.

Cinema-eye, photo-eye groups sprang up, etc.

Every day someone would leave a movie theater after seeing an art-drama, feeling disgust for the first time, and remember cinema-eye.

As the slogan cinema-eye spread, the popularity of the name itself grew.

Worker correspondents for various press organs began to sign themselves "cinema-eye" when they described everyday phenomena; a "cinema-eye" movie theater opened in Yaroslavl'; the "cinema-eye" of a peacock's tail flashed by on Moscow posters; notes on cinema-eye and caricatures of it became daily occurrences. . . .

But if it is possible to forgive a worker correspondent for *Komar* for signing "cinema-eye" to the little scenes he's spied upon, one can't forgive a "cinema-eye" theater for opening not with Part One of *Kino-Glaz*, but with *The Indian Tomb*¹⁴ or something of that sort.

The filming of Part One of *Kino-Glaz*, which interrupted our organizational work and deprived us of several technical positions, enriched our knowledge and experience.

In this work of ours we were testing ourselves, above all. Our most pressing tasks presented themselves more clearly and practically.

We really came to know those difficulties awaiting us, and although we haven't overcome them completely, we are already familiar with them and understand how to overcome them. We learned a great deal in this struggle, and this lesson will not go to waste.

We have ceased to be merely experimenters; we are already assuming responsibility to the proletarian viewer; and, facing the shopkeepers and specialists boycotting us, we now close our ranks for a fierce battle.

1926

On the Film *The Eleventh* [Year]

Comrades, *The Eleventh Year*, just like Part One of *Kino-Glaz*, *Forward, Soviet!*, and *A Sixth of the World*, is one model, one type of nonacted film.

14. *Das Indische Grabmal* (1923), scenario by Fritz Lang, directed by Joe May.

As the author of the film-object shown today, I would like to draw your attention to the film's following aspects:

First of all, *The Eleventh Year* is written in the purest film-language, the "language of the eye." *The Eleventh Year* is conceived for visual perception, "visual thinking."

Secondly, *The Eleventh Year* is written by the movie camera in documentary language, in the language of facts recorded on film.

Thirdly, *The Eleventh Year* is written in the socialist language, the language of the communist decoding of the visible world.

Before you begin to discuss the film, I would also like to respond to several of the very interesting questions put to me during the last few days in connection with its screening at the Hermitage Cinema.

The first question: "Don't some of the shots in *The Eleventh Year* rely on symbolism?" No. We do not emphasize symbolism. If it turns out that several shots or montage phrases, brought to perfection, develop to the significance of symbols, we do not panic or feel we must exclude them from the film. We believe that a symbolist film and a series of shots rationally constructed, developed to the significance of symbols, are two completely different concepts.

The second question: "Why do you make use of complex shots, cinema-photo-montage?" We resort to complex shots either in order to show simultaneous action, or to separate a detail from the overall film-image, or with the aim of contrasting two or more facts. The explanation of this as a trick method does not correspond to reality.

The third question: "Doesn't it seem to you that the first few reels are better edited than the subsequent ones?" Lately this question has been asked especially often. Such an impression is deceptive. The first reel is apparently on a level more easily perceived by the viewer. The fourth and fifth are constructed in a more complex way. There is much more montage inventiveness in them than in the first two; they look more to the future of cinematography than the second and third reels. I must say that the fourth and fifth reels have the same relationship to the first ones that college does to high school. It is natural that the more complex montage causes the viewer to experience greater tension and requires special attention in order to be perceived.

The fourth question: "Was *The Eleventh Year* made without a scenario?" Yes, like all cinema-eye films, *The Eleventh Year* was made without a scenario. You know, in exploiting this rejection of the scenario our numerous opponents have attempted to present things as though we are against planned work altogether. Whereas, contrary to prevailing notions, the *kinoks* devote far more labor and attention to a preliminary plan than do workers in dramatic cinema. Before setting to work, a given theme is studied with great care in all of its aspects; literature on the issue is studied; in order to gain the clearest possible understanding of the matter every source is used. Before shooting, thematic, itinerary, and calendar plans are drawn up. How do these plans differ from a scenario? They

Dziga Vertov. The Eleventh [Year]. 1928.



differ in that all of this is the *plan of action for the movie camera* once the given theme appears in life, but not a *plan for staging* the same theme. How does the filming plan of an actual battle differ from a plan for staging a series of separate battle scenes? The difference between cinema-eye's plan and the scenario in artistic cinematography amounts roughly to this.

The final question concerns intertitles and has been put by many comrades in this form: "How do you explain the abundance of titles in *A Sixth of the World* and the lack of them in *The Eleventh Year*?" In *A Sixth of the World* we were experimenting by putting titles in parentheses through the creation of a specific series of "word-themes." The word-theme has been abolished in *The Eleventh Year* and the significance of the titles reduced nearly to zero. The picture is constructed through the interweaving of film-phrases, without using titles. Titles have almost no significance in *The Eleventh Year*. Which is better, then? The first experiment or the second? I feel that both experiments—the creation of word-themes and their abolition—are equally important and extremely significant, for cinema-eye and for all of Soviet cinema.

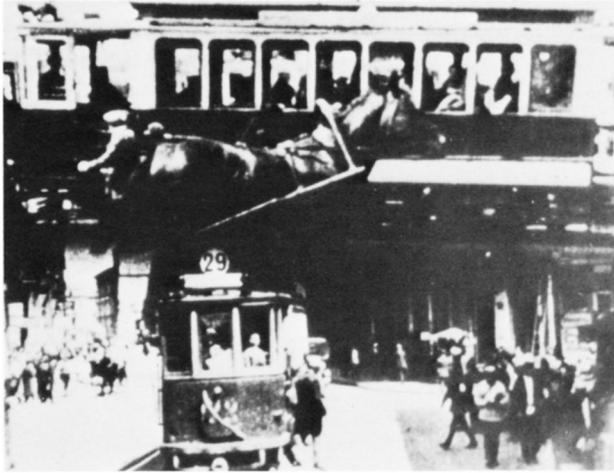
1928

The Man with a Movie Camera

Work on *The Man with a Movie Camera* required greater effort than previous cinema-eye work. This can be explained by the greater number of locations under observation as well as by complex organizational and technical operations while filming. The montage experiments demanded exceptional effort. These experiments went on constantly.

The Man with a Movie Camera is straightforward, inventive, and sharply contradicts that distributor's slogan: "The more clichés, the better." That slogan

Dziga Vertov. *The Man with a Movie Camera*. 1929.



prevents us, the workers on this film, from thinking of rest despite great fatigue. We must make the distributors put aside their slogan with respect to the film. *The Man with a Movie Camera* needs maximal, inventive presentation.

In Kharkov I was asked: “How is it that you’re in favor of stirring titles, and suddenly we have *The Man with a Movie Camera*—a film without words or titles?” My response was, “No, I’m not in favor of stirring titles, not in favor of titles at all—that’s the invention of certain critics!”

Indeed, the cinema-eye group, following its renunciation of the film studio, of actors, sets, and the script, fought for a decisive cleaning up of film-language, for its complete separation from the language of theater and literature. Thus, in *A Sixth of the World* the titles are, as it were, bracketed out of the picture and isolated into a contrapuntally constructed word-radio-theme.

“Very little room is devoted to titles in *The Eleventh Year* (their modest role is further expressed by the graphic execution of the titles), so that a title can be cut out without in any way disturbing the film’s force.” (*Filmfront*, 1928, no. 2.)

And further: “In its specific weight and practical significance the intertitle in a genuine film-object (and *The Eleventh Year* is such) is just like the quotation about gold from *Timon of Athens* in Marx’s analysis of money in *Capital*. Incidentally, for the most part these titles are precisely quotations, which might stand for the text during the layout of a book.” (*Filmfront*, 1928, no. 2.)

Thus the complete absence of titles in *The Man with a Movie Camera* does not come as something unexpected, but has been prepared by all the previous cinema-eye experiments.

The Man with a Movie Camera represents not only a practical result; it is, as well, a theoretical manifestation on the screen. That is apparently why public debates on it in Kharkov and Kiev assumed the aspect of a fierce battle between

representatives of various trends in so-called art. Moreover, the dispute took place on several levels at once. Some said *The Man with a Movie Camera* was an experiment in visual music, a visual concert. Others saw the film in terms of a higher mathematics of montage. Still others declared that it was not "life as it is," but life the way *they* do not see it, etc.

Whereas the film is only the sum of the facts recorded on film, or, if you like, not merely the sum, but the product, a "higher mathematics" of facts. Each item or each factor is a separate little document. The documents have been joined with one another so that, on the one hand, the film would consist only of those linkages between signifying pieces that coincide with the visual linkages and so that, on the other hand, these linkages would not require intertitles; the final sum of all these linkages represents, therefore, an organic whole.

This complex experiment, whose success is admitted by the majority of those comrades who have expressed any opinion, frees us, in the first place, from the tutelage of literature and the theater and brings us face to face with 100% cinematography. Secondly, it sharply opposes "life as it is," seen by the aided eye of the movie camera (cinema-eye), to "life as it is," seen by the imperfect human eye.

1928

Dziga Vertov

