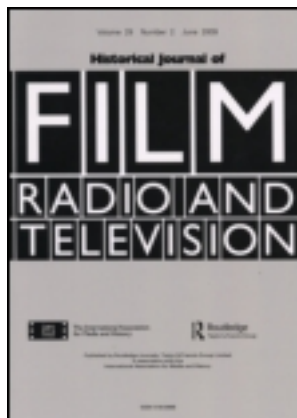


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Publisher: Routledge

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Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/chjf20>

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Published online: 15 Sep 2006.

To cite this article: Rashit Yangirov & Richard Taylor (1991) Soviet Cinema in the Twenties: national alternatives, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 11:2, 129-139, DOI: [10.1080/01439689100260151](https://doi.org/10.1080/01439689100260151)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01439689100260151>

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Soviet Cinema in the Twenties: national alternatives

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Translated by Richard Taylor

The first post-Revolutionary decade in Soviet Russia was spent in a unique socio-political experiment and this gave rise to a unique cultural-historical situation: a competitive co-existence between traditional trends in artistic consciousness and innovative explorations amongst artists insisting on an almost violent overthrow of the prevailing canons and on their own right to expand into adjacent spheres. This situation, brought about by the influence of the external, and in many ways elemental, forces of the Revolution, displayed that unstable mixture that is specific to a 'transitional period' so that, the more clearly it was observed by contemporaries, the more rapidly and completely it was forgotten after it had been superseded. In this respect the short, and quickly forgotten, 'romance' between the authorities and Futurism is indicative.

The outstanding figure in the ranks of Futurism, Nadezhda Udaltsova, who in summer of 1918 became the head of the Cinema and Theatre Subsection and a member of the board of the Fine Arts Section of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment [Narkompros], gave public expression at that time, not so much to her own individual or group aesthetic credo as to the general desire of her school for the universal legitimate embodiment of that credo:

The vast majority of the Russian people do not merely live in extremely hideous, unhygienic and unsuitable conditions and surroundings, but, alas they seem themselves to want that filth and nonsense. Nonetheless we must not tolerate it but must throw it into the dustbin, like old rubbish. On this we must insist... All Russia must be 'assembled' [*montirovana*] anew, fundamentally 'restructured' [*perestroena*]. We are faced with the need for a new reform, which is matched only by the reforms of Peter the Great. It is not only the essence of our life that must be changed, but its external appearance. Our whole way of life is profoundly reactionary. It will have to be completely destroyed because of the conditions that are necessary for life. It is not just the 'cherry orchards' that will disappear, but the 'outbuildings round the courtyard', the overblown and shabby cosiness in our inner and outer lives, in our work and our leisure. Everyone will be *forced* to live in a new way, if he does not consciously choose this new road. We have to change more than our dwellings, which threaten us with collapse, more than our domestic situation, which is broken-down and crippled, we have to change the way we walk, behave and move. All these things must change and 'catch

up'. And, above all, of course, our tastes, our habits and our practices . . . Now our way of life is disintegrating not just because of the prophetic works of our poets and artists; it is disintegrating of its own accord, it is perishing because it cannot satisfy the new demands. . . . Quite different tasks for creativity are now emerging and they are positive, rather than negative. Creativity cannot simply oppose everyday life, it inevitably strives to *create a new life*. [1]

The young Viktor Shklovsky, acutely sensitive to his own personal responsibility for the fate of the artistic avant-garde, protested passionately against these intentions:

By a strange coincidence Futurism has become the official art of Soviet Russia . . . But this art will cost us dear, because progressive artists are trying to procreate something that has not yet been born, attempting to combine things that are not combined—art and politics. [2]

At that time art for him was still something that was 'free from life and its colours never reflected the colours of the flag flying on the city castle' [3]. Much later, in contrast, after he had learned 'to be a citizen of my own country, a free and willing captive of a brilliant time' [4], he was one of that small number of surviving participants and eye-witnesses who had not lost their faith and who, to a considerable degree, influenced the retrospective analysis of the epoch of the Revolution. That analysis was predetermined, despite the variety of interpretations, by the presumption of the pre-eminence of this 'prompted' dominant. Moreover, historical perspective distorted things in its favour and the 'tradition' that had been overthrown by the innovators was regarded merely as an unproductive, regressive factor, ignoring its socio-cultural status, which was changing in the conditions of the new reality and which included its submergence in the conservative thick of the 'foreign' [*inoazychnyi*] outlook of the peasantry and the outlying national districts [5].

The current demand for a thoroughgoing and comprehensive evaluation of this complex historical period and of the socio- and ethno-cultural processes that went on within it, fermented by creative catalysts of varying quality and direction, necessitates a rejection of the earlier historiosophical schema, which was largely speculative and based on the axiomatic existence of a universal revolutionary paradigm in Soviet Russia that seemed naturally to include the attendant experiment in the sphere of the arts. We are becoming ever more acutely aware of the discrepancy between this artificial construct and historical realities. Among those realities it is worth mentioning at least two important, but underrated factors: firstly, the asynchronism and relative autonomy of the movement of artistic consciousness and of its existence in its social context independently of general changes in the historical context; and secondly, the visionary mentality of the artistic avant-garde which was primordially orientated towards 'external expansion' rather than to a complete reproduction of the contours of its 'mother' culture, or to the synthesised model of transnational cultural symbiosis that had formed in the post-Revolutionary period [6]. These phenomena deserve the most thorough examination. The essence and the measure of 'innovation' and their correlation to 'tradition' in the course of this model's genesis have moved on to a different plane and been placed in different categories from the limited sphere of creative experiments.

When putting forward his own theory of literary evolution, Yuri Tynyanov warned that, 'Our point of view determines not just the meaning but also the character of the phenomenon we are studying' [7]. As it stands, this idea contains important methodological constructs which have a broader and more general application and which may

be extrapolated on to a phenomenon like Soviet artistic culture in the twenties as well as on to the related figurative systems of which, together with literature, it was composed. This approach allows us to distinguish in each one of them different strata, which do not merely correlate functionally but are simultaneously asynchronous in terms of the character of their own genesis within the framework of a single 'time system'. It is equally important that this approach eliminates the distortion of historical perspective and exposes the now meaningless ideological relevance of an aesthetic conflict between the old and the new, while revealing the 'biological nature' of their co-existence and the fertility of their mutual 'repulsion'.

In our chosen context, new approaches are also possible the towards reconstruction of the historical model of Soviet cinema that came into being in its own specific forms in the period under examination. Because it was 'technological', cinema was the first of the arts to become an object of particular attention on the part of the state and its ideology, as the proving ground for the realisation of the doctrine of 'art for the workers'. On the other hand, cinema, as a living self-regulating system, continued to function in conditions laid down in the preceding historical epoch, despite the changing external circumstances of their operation. It is essentially within the framework of this contradiction that all the political, economic, organisational and creative processes within and around cinema developed in the first post-Revolutionary decade.

One of the most influential leaders and ideologists of Bolshevism, Lev Trotsky, first suggested that cinema might be used as a long-term replacement for earlier socio-cultural mechanisms in his article 'Vodka, the Church and Cinema'. He linked this to the task of taming the wilder excesses of the peasantry, thus indirectly underlining that this was to be a very long-term process indeed. 'Cinema is a powerful medium', he declared to an audience of cultural and educational field workers in July 1924, 'and, when we reach the stage where our rural huts have rural cinemas, that will mean that we are near to achieving Socialism' [8].

Apart from rural Russia, there existed another area of spontaneity, equally complex in terms of its 'resistance to material force', the conglomeration of backward and non-Russian-speaking peoples of the emancipated colonial empire. Granted equal rights to participate in the revolutionary reconstruction of the world, they were also selected as the objects of a purposeful cinema expansion:

It is precisely among us that the 'great silent' [cinema] should . . . penetrate the heart of every one of the toiling masses, regardless of his dialect or education, and thus facilitate the alliance [*smychka*] of the workers and ploughmen of the central regions with the mountain people of the Caucasus, the peasants and herdsmen of Central Asia, and so on, rallying them with a single will and thought on the path of struggle for a new life. This is the highest and most worthwhile task for art [9].

The propaganda campaign for the mobilisation of 'public attention' to resolve this task became one of the most extensive and prolonged campaigns in the development of cinema in the twenties. Its continuing topicality and the mounting emotion in the tone of commentators prove not just that the goal was not chosen lightly, but also that the gulf between the propaganda slogans and the practical reality was enormous and that it did not diminish, despite the efforts made. The admissions of one of the most active propagandists and fighters for a national 'cinema front' are eloquent testimony:

Forty-five million oriental, mainly Muslim, peoples live in the USSR and their way of life is quite distinct from that of the Russian people, as are their

outlook on life and their whole psychological make-up. The majority of them are illiterate and this cannot be overcome in the short term because of the absence of a national intelligentsia . . . Here we must apply special methods for the dissemination of political ideas and knowledge. Here spoken propaganda is hampered because it requires thousands and thousands of trained political workers from among these nations, *but there are none*. For this reason we have to use silent methods of propaganda, and we are only aware of one such method: propaganda through cinema. . . . For oriental peoples we need quite special films that have been particularly devised for them. These films must meet quite particular conditions: they must take account of the psychology of the oriental peasant and of his image of the world in the context of the Communist critique.' [10]

The text quoted is noteworthy both for its normative tones *vis-à-vis* the genre and thematic structure of a barely identified and not yet fully realised national cinema and for its intimations of the serious pretensions held by the first men to fulfil this particular social command. He continues:

We must insist to all film-producing organisations that we need oriental films, not so much for the Western viewer as for the oriental peasant . . . The oriental film must explain to the workers the transformation that has taken place in the relationships between Russia and the oriental nations that are linked to it. It must show that the Russian toiling masses are friends and, indeed, that they never were the enemies and oppressors of the oriental people. The oriental film must familiarise the oriental peasantry with the Revolution that has occurred and with the role of the toiling masses of East and West in its development.

The oriental film must tell the oriental nations about imperialism, about the developing struggle between the reactionary imperialist West and the revolutionary nationalist East . . . Lastly, the oriental film must lead the fight against the basic prejudices of oriental peoples . . . , but this fight must be skilful and careful, taking account of the psychology of the oriental masses and not insulting their feelings.

To accomplish these tasks it is essential that the leading role in the making of oriental films be taken out of the hands of ignorant arch-revolutionary daredevils and of the 'established' directors with their old traditions, who create a *confectionery* East . . .

The irritation felt by the ideologues of Soviet cinema was quite easily explained: the first attempts to tackle the theme that had been formulated were made predominantly by traditionalist 'specialists' who smuggled old creative ideas into the new material. Their obeisance to accumulated, but rejected experience, barely concealed beneath the new vision of the world, and to the predilections of an audience which was not weighed down with ideological complexes and was therefore more favourably inclined to film spectacles, seriously hampered the fulfilment of the political tasks that had been set. The lone cry, 'We need an oriental *Battleship* [*Potemkin*]!' [11] was completely drowned by a chorus of indignant critics demanding the excommunication from Soviet screens of 'cine-marmelade', i.e. films with national minority subject-matter [12]. The practical consequence of this was the excommunication from the capital's studio sets of the makers of *The Minaret of Death* (*Minaret smerti*, dir: Vyacheslav Viskovsky, 1925), *The Legend of the Maiden's Tower* (*Legenda o devich'ei bashne*, dir: Vladimir Ballyu-

zek, 1924), *The Seething East* (*Klokochushchii Vostok*, [also known as *The Eyes of Andozia* (*Glaza Andozii*)], dir: Dmitri Bassalygo, 1926), *Alim* (dir: Georgi Tasin, 1926), *The Song on the Rock* (*Pesn' na kamne*, dir: Leo Moor, 1926) [13], *In the Grip of Tradition* (*Pod vlast'yu adata*, dir: Vladimir Kasyanov, 1926) and similar pictures [14].

Another process ran parallel to these attempts at a normative channelling of 'oriental' subject-matter along correct ideological lines. It was a process that was almost out of the organisers' hands: the decentralisation of film production to the national Republics. The new structures of Soviet cinema emerged and developed within the framework of the opposition mentioned above: state-ideological pretensions to monopoly in the sphere of spiritual culture, on the one hand, and the internal pace of movement of the cinema process itself.

The starting point, which determined the whole subsequent course of events, must be the, at least at first glance, particularly technical question of the organisational forms of the nationalised cinema industry [15]. The industry's overall condition during the first decade itself pointed towards rigid control from the centre over local subordinate subdivisions [16], but the revival associated with the New Economic Policy, which encompassed cinema as well, in fact deprived the centre of sole control. The restraint on private enterprise in what was acknowledged to be an ideologically important sphere, through prohibition and restriction, was maintained by forming a multiplicity of state cinema enterprises and their offshoots. By 1923, however, when the threat of the 'Nepmanisation' of cinema had already been removed, the time came to 'harmonise' the system of state cinema, which had developed rapidly in market conditions. It was impossible to achieve the establishment of Party and state control over cinema in conditions where the structures that constituted that cinema were in competition with one another.

That, in short, is the pre-history of the two alternative projects for the reorganisation of the Soviet film industry: limited company or syndicate. The choice that was made was determined not merely by considerations of economic expediency but also by political calculations, which were confirmed at a much later date. The legal framework for this solution took some time to emerge: it was only in August 1926 that distribution and film production within the Russian Federation were united under the aegis of Sovkino, because of the perfectly understandable separatist positions taken by a number of Moscow and Leningrad cinema organisations, which had been deprived of the choice of alternative and had become limited companies through the arbitrary decision of superior Party and state structures [17]. This was not yet a matter of a generalised 'cinema economy' covering the whole of the Soviet Union—that was for the longer term—and the Union Republics retained their own sovereign monopoly rights. However the outcome was predetermined: the model of vertical structuring and rigid centralisation, which had been tried first in Russia, reaffirmed its longevity and its right to wider dissemination. That was the general drift of the processes of reorganisation in Soviet cinema that existed for more than a decade and a half after August 1919 [18].

The centralisation of cinema in the Russian Federation, which was the first experience of the future schema for cinema throughout the Soviet Union as a whole, affected the interests of many of the national minorities. The narrowing of the confines of the cinema process for the sake of excluding private initiative and liquidating parallel state structures was reinforced by the legal monopolisation of cinema affairs in the hands of the centre. This completely eradicated any opportunity for the emergence

of individual cinemas in the autonomous national regions which were so stoutly defending their sovereign rights to independent cultural construction [19]. The situation was aggravated by the position of the film studios in the capital, which had little interest in the needs of 'unphotogenic' national subject-matter. Nevertheless, a fairly flexible nationalities policy permitted a compromise solution: the emerging cinema of the Autonomous Republics was placed under the aegis of the People's Commissariat for Enlightenment as one of the priority areas in the cultural regeneration of Russia's national minorities. This was a fairly fragile mechanism, operating at the conjunction of two opposing and not as yet balanced directions in Party and state policy and based in many cases on the precedent of practice in one or the other. It is worth noting that the pace of the spontaneous process of establishing cinema amongst the non-Russian peoples of Russia frequently outstripped many Union Republics. In February 1924 Tatkin was set up under Narkompros of Tartaria (it was the first mixed state and private enterprise); in autumn 1925 the shooting of the first Chuvash feature film, *The Volga Rebels* (*Volzhskie buntari*, dir: Pavel Petrov-Bytov, 1926) began as a co-production between Chuvashkino and Leningradkino (Chuvashkino was officially constituted at the end of 1927). The history of Dagkino in Daghestan began with the travelogue *The Gates to the Caucasus* (*Vorota Kavkaza*), shot in the summer of 1926 in collaboration with Sovkino, while the feature film *Martin Wagner* (*Martin Vagner*, dir: V. Massino, 1928) heralded the existence of Nemkino in the Volga German Autonomous Republic. In the same year active preparations were carried out to create Bashgoskino in Bashkiria and Markino in the Mari Autonomous Republic. The Kino-Sibir studio, independently of the centre, was also in that period actively shooting both documentary and feature films devoted to the peoples of Siberia and the Far East.

Sovkino had a monopoly not just of the system of distribution (the most important source of revenue in the cinema industry) but also of the technical provision for film production. In these circumstances the national cinema organisations of Russia, finding themselves in complex and frequently conflicting relationships with Sovkino, created some original means for self-preservation, extending from co-productions to 'guest' invitations to 'film specialists' from the capital, and so managed in this way to keep up their creative work. The enforced economy of production costs and an orientation towards film spectacles that attracted the attention of the mass audience guaranteed for this kind of film production a ready market across the whole country and maintained a steady financial position. The only completed feature film from Tatkin, *Bulat-Batyr* (dir: Yuri Tarich, 1927), was among the few Soviet films to be released on foreign screens, where it was well received and called 'the Tartar William Tell' [20]. However even the first efforts of the semi-amateurish film studios provoked embittered and long-concealed opposition from cinema organisations at the centre, which overflowed into undisguised forms of sabotage and discrimination aimed at stifling independent film production (which was successful, for instance, in the case of Dagkino).

Regardless of their artistic value, which as a rule was extremely mediocre, the films of the national Autonomous Republics played a significant role in the cultural self-determination of their peoples and unexpectedly stimulated progress in associated spheres of creativity, such as the figurative arts, theatre and literature [21]. The liveliest set-up was Chuvashkino, established on the initiative of the founder of the Chuvash National Theatre, the scriptwriter and dramatist, Ioakinf Maximov-Koshkin-sky. Between 1926 and 1930 he managed to get regular production of newsreels going, as well as directing or participating in the production of six feature films [22].

The peak of public interest in the cinema of Russia's Autonomous Republics was reached at the time of the 1927 anniversary celebrations, during the exhibition in Moscow of the arts of the Soviet nationalities, including their achievements in the field of cinema [23]. It was followed by a mighty propagandist flood of publications aimed at discrediting these islands of national film production in Russia. As before, it was dominated by that same idea of the need to create ideologically approved and 'class useful' national films, alternating with complaints about the absence of such desirable films in the repertoire of the national studios.

The leader writer in *Sovetskii ekran* (Soviet Screen), asserted:

It may be that every Uzbek, Georgian or Chuvash will understand an American film with Fairbanks, but he will not benefit from it—and there's no point in Soviet power even trying to make him understand. As many as ninety-nine per cent of Russian films, all these *The Three Millions Trial* (*Protseſs o trekh millionakh*, dir: Yakov Protazanov, 1926), *The Bear's Wedding* (*Medvezh'ya svad'ba*, dir: Konstantin Eggert, 1926), *The Overcoat* (*Shinel'*, dir: Grigori Kozintsev & Leonid Trauberg, 1926), and so on, are alien to the Uzbek peasant, for instance.

Film production on his behalf . . . is called upon to make films especially for him, to respect the degree of his development, his interests, his needs . . . But today, apart from two or three films, while the peoples of the periphery have their own film studios, they do not have their own cinema. But they have a right to demand their own cinema too. [24]

As the deadline for the 1st All-Union Party Conference on Cinema in March 1928 approached, broad and far-reaching recommendations crept into the press with increasing frequency. One critic insisted that, 'Uzbekgoskino, Chuvashkino and Belgoskino, despite their declarations, cannot be considered national cinema organisations.' He proposed 'that these organisations, most of them with scant resources, should be made materially dependent on some central organ . . . This dependence is the principal condition for serious control over the work of these organisations . . .' [25].

The model for this kind of organ (discussed as early as 1925) was put forward in 1927 in the form of a limited company to be called *Vostochnoe kino* (Oriental Cinema) [26]. At first it was completely ignored by national cinema organisations, but the resolutions of the Party Conference mentioned above determined their fate. Once more the main argument was the need for further 'harmonisation' of the cinema process:

The production plans of national cinema organisations are growing from year to year, frequently exceeding the staffing and financial potential for their realisation and in the most negative fashion reflecting on the quality of film production, which must have and has all the resources it needs to achieve high artistic and ideological standards . . . But the pace we now observe, given the absence of *co-ordination* in the plans for cinema construction on an all-Union scale, conceals . . . great dangers which, if they are not averted in time, might raze to the ground the whole business of national cinema . . . The problems of planning the film industry will be decided basically at the Party conference, but one step towards their resolution is the formation of *Vostochnoe kino*. [27]

This initiative from the centre drew a line under the history of the autonomous existence of cinema organisations in the Russian Federation. By the end of the decade they had all, despite desperate resistance, been incorporated into a centralised organisational structure which based its creative and productive activity on the fallacious principle of national 'quotas'. The drama of this deliberately provoked situation was accentuated by the fact that the newly created cinema organisation had neither the necessary financial resources, nor the technical equipment, nor the qualified cadres to develop full-scale production. This meant that its repertory plan was consistently orientated towards shooting inexpensive, predominantly non-played 'nature' films on location. Vostokkino's creative achievements were isolated—*Turksib* is the best known—and in artistic terms were no better than the films made by Tatkinio, Chuvashkino and similar cinema organisations. Nevertheless we cannot deny the contribution made by Vostokkino to the process of the formation of national cinema cultures among the peoples of Russia.

The crystallisation of the structures of Soviet cinema and the methods of its management confirmed the artificial and impracticable status of a centralised cinema organisation expected to serve the multi-million-strong audience of national minorities. The gradual inclusion in its sphere of influence of new autonomous bodies, and sometimes of independent state organisations that had no connection with the Russian Federation, either through common territory or other legal ties (such as Mongolia, Abkhazia or Karelia) pushed the Sovkino leadership towards the idea of a voluntary-compulsory grouping around Vostokkino and to this end the organisation was transformed into the all-Union cinema trust Vostokfilm in 1932. However this infringement of the sovereignty of the Union Republics was rejected and the existence of a base cinema organisation finally lost its rationale.

In August 1935 the Vostokfilm trust was liquidated by decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian Federation and its functions transferred to GUKF, the State Enterprise for the Cinema and Photographic Industry [28]. The formal reason for this decision was the result of an investigation and the subsequent widely publicised trial of the trust's leaders for embezzlement and misappropriation of funds [29]. The principal defendants were shot and the trust's artistic personnel were arbitrarily dispersed around the film studios of the capital and the Republics. These events brought to an end the brief history of the cinema of Russia's national minorities, which ceased to exist in any organisational form, and whose creative and culture-forming status has never been restored to the present day.

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NOTES

- [1] *Doklad Udaltsovoi v Professional'nom soyuze* (Udaltsova's Report to the Trade Union), *Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv RSFSR* (Central State Archive of the RSFSR) (hereafter TsGA RSFSR), 2306/23/3, pp. 59–60.
- [2] Quoted from: V. SHKLOVSKII, *Gamburgskii schet. Stat'i—Vospominaniya—Esse, 1914–1933* [The Hamburg Reckoning. Articles, Memoirs, Essays, 1914–33] (Moscow, 1990), p. 492. The general attitude towards the Futurist experiment in restructuring everyday city life, which was most clearly manifested during the May Day celebrations, in 1918, was widely recorded in the independent press: see: *Narodnoe slovo* [The People's Word], April–May 1918, Nos 4, 15 & 19.

- [3] V. SHKLOVSKII, 'Ulyya, ullyya, marsiane!' (Hello, Hello! It's the Martians!), *Iskusstvo kommuny* (Art of the Commune), No. 17, 30 March 1919, reprinted in: Shklovskii, p. 79. The break between Futurism and the authorities became definitely noticeable as early as the spring of 1919 and may be illustrated by the unpublished and undated note from the Head of the Fine Arts Department of Narkompros, David Shterenberg to People's Commissar Lunacharsky:

I am leaving for Petrograd as a matter of urgency to deal with the May Day celebrations. Andreyev, obviously with the assistance of Antsiolovich, has organised the celebrations without referring to the (Fine Arts) Department, but the resolution of the Council (of People's Commissars) is grounded on the assertion that the October celebrations were a failure because of the Department's participation. This is an outrageous slander. I ask you in the Council of People's Commissars to issue an official statement to the effect that the October celebrations were arranged without reference to the Department. If the Council is to behave in this manner towards the organs of the Commissariat, all our work will be paralysed. . . . Unless the Council of People's Commissars takes steps to call the slanderers to account, I shall leave the service of the Soviet state and try through the press to persuade all active artistic forces not to let themselves be deceived.

See: TsGA RSFSR 2306/23/18, pp. 8–9a. On Zinoviev's part in this anti-Futurist campaign, see: Shklovskii, p. 492.

- [4] V. SHKLOVSKII, *Za 60 let. Raboty o kino* (Through Sixty Years. Works on Cinema) (Moscow, 1985), p. 8. On Shklovsky's ideological and aesthetic evolution and his retrospective influence on the study of the Russian avant-garde and its epoch, see the article by Venyamin Kaverin, 'Ya podnimayu ruku i sdayus'' (I Raise My Hand and Surrender), in idem, *Epilog* (Epilogue) (Moscow, 1989), pp. 32–45.
- [5] The Russian word here translated as 'foreign', *inoazychnyi*, literally 'foreign-language', means in this context 'non-Russian-speaking'. The work of the leaders of the 'peasant literature' movement—Yesenin, Klyuyev, Shirayevets—might serve as an illustration of this particular thesis. The general tendency of the movement was completely imitative. We might also mention the conscious move into 'peasant' and 'hunting' themes by the writers Ivan Sokolov-Mikitov and Mikhail Prishvin. Yet another example is the creative fate of Yefim Chestnyakov.
- [6] Attempts to assimilate exotic national material were however made in poetry (Khlebnikov) and painting (Alexander Volkov). On the latter, see: M. I. ZEMSKAYA, *Aleksandr Volkov. Master 'Granatovoi chaikhany'* (Alexander Volkov. The Master of the 'Garnet Tea-House') (Moscow, 1975). 'The task is not just to implant here (in the East) the technical concepts of European artistic creativity, but to recruit the great art of the East for the new life': S. Gorodetskii, *Nashi zadachi* (Our tasks), *Iskusstvo* (Art), Baku, 1921, No. 1, p. 6.
- [7] Yu. Tynyanov, *O literaturnoi evolyutsii* (On Literary Evolution), quoted from: idem, *Poetika. Istoriya literatury. Kino* (Poetics. The History of Literature. Cinema) (Moscow, 1977), p. 271.
- [8] From a speech to the Second Congress of Librarians of Glavpolitprosvet (the Chief Political-Educational Committee of Narkompros), quoted from: *Kniga o knigakh* (A Book About Books), 1924, Nos 7/8, p. 16. The observations of the reactions of the peasant audience to cinema are summarised in the collection: A. KATSIGRAS & M. S. VEREMIENKO (Eds), *Za kinopredvizhku* (For Mobile Cinema) (Moscow, 1924).
- [9] See: *Sovetskoe kino* (Soviet Cinema), 1925, No. 1, p. 3.
- [10] A. SKACHKO, *Kino i vostochnye narody SSSR* (Cinema and the Oriental Nations of the USSR), *ibid*, pp. 23–25. On the outstanding author of this article, see: T. GLINKA, *Komandarm Skachko* (Army Commander Skachko), *Moskovskaya pravda* (Moscow Truth), Nos 275 & 277, 1 & 3 December 1987.
- [11] *Trud* (Labour), Baku, 27 July 1926, quoted from: *Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstvo* (Central State Archive of Literature and the Arts) (hereafter TsGALI) 1923/1/89, p. 44.
- [12] 'Soviet cinema began by doing violence to the Civil War. When the subject had been exhausted in hundreds of subsequently lost films, our cinema masters started to violate history. Then it was the life of the national minorities. . . . The most unusual subject matters raised by the Great October Socialist Revolution were spat upon, defiled, violated by a dozen nasty films and simply died out. . . . After countless Uzbek, Circassian, Chuvash, Eskimo, Azerbaijani and other "exotic" films, who was going to tolerate even a thousand metres of any sort of "national life": I. TRAUBERG, *Iznasilovannye temy* (Violated Subjects), *Kino* (Cinema), Leningrad supplement, No. 11, 15 March 1927. See also the same author's satirical piece, *Pod vlast'yu Vostoka. Iz dnevnika umuchennogo kinozritelya* (In the Grip of the East. From the Diary of a Tormented Filmgoer), *ibid.*, No. 24, 15 July 1926.
- [13] These films provoked a hostile reaction even among professional audiences who were remote from ideology. Osip Mandelstam, for instance, expressed his attitude towards 'Crimean Tartar' feature films:

'A generation is growing up that will base its image of the past on films like this. It is shameful for our children. And for the Tartars': *Tatarskie kovboi* (Tartar Cowboys), *Sovetskii ekran* (Soviet Screen), 1926, No. 14, p. 4.

- [14] There are more details about this in my article: "'Spetsy" v sovetskom kinematografe' ('Specialists' in Soviet Cinema), *Tynyanoovskii sbornik. Chetvertye Tynyanoovskie chteniya* (The Tynyanoov Collection. The Fourth Tynyanoov Readings), Riga (in press).
- [15] This subject has unfortunately attracted almost no interest among Soviet scholars. See: A. GAK, *K istorii sozdaniya Sovkino* (On the History of the Creation of Sovkino), *Iz istorii kino* (From the History of Cinema), No. 5 (Moscow, 1962), pp. 131-144; YU. I. GORYACHEV, *Istoriya stroitel'stva sovetskoi kinematografii, 1917-1925* (The History of the Construction of Soviet Cinema, 1917-1925) (Moscow, 1977). There is a reasonably complete survey of events and an analysis of them in: R. TAYLOR, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema, 1917-1929* (Cambridge, 1979).
- [16] The first attempt to organise local film production in Tartaria in December 1921, for example, was suppressed in this way. See the letter from the Head of VFKO (the All-Union Photographic and Cinema Department of Narkompros), Pyotr Voyevodin, to the Photographic and Cinema Department of the Tartar Republic. TsGALI 989/1/59, p. 1.
- [17] The Mezhrabpom-Rus company, a unique phenomenon in Soviet cinema, preserved its special status till the end of the twenties. See my article, *Nezavisimoe kino: vzglyad v proshloe* (Independent Cinema: a look into the past), in the broadsheet *Assotsiatsiya nezavisimogo kino* (The Association for Independent Cinema), published by Soyuzinformkino, Moscow, July 1990.
- [18] The completion of this process was described by the author of a contemporary historical apologia in this way:

For cinema, the years of the Five-Year Plan were not just years of ideological *perestroika*, but also of organisational *perestroika* and of technical reconstruction. In 1930 Sovkino was transformed into Soyuzkino and this meant that the national cinema organisations . . . , which had hitherto existed independently and separately, were united under the auspices of an all-Union organ, which had to run and put into effect nationality policy in the field of cinema. In February 1933, in order to further increase the role and importance of cinema as a factor in the cultural development of the country, the government reorganised Soyuzkino into GUKF, the Chief Directorate for the Cinema and Photographic Industry, removed it from the competence of the People's Commissariat for Light Industry, and subordinated it directly to the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. Cinema was given the best possible conditions for its artistic and technical development.

See: N. IEZUITOV, *Puti khudozhestvennogo fil'ma, 1919-1934* (The Paths of Feature Film, 1919-1934) (Moscow, 1934), pp. 126-127.

- [19] Originally, by a resolution of the 1st All-Union Conference of Narkompros Cinema Organisations in March 1924, in which both the newly established Tat kino and the Crimean branch of Narkompros participated, monopoly rights were granted not merely to Union Republics but to Autonomous Republics as well. See: TsGALI 989/1/445; *Kinonedelya* [Cine-Week], 1924, No. 9, pp. 1-6. On the relationship between the Russian Autonomous Republics and cinema, see: *Tri goda politprosvetaboty. Po materialam IV Vserossiiskogo s'ezda politprosvetov* (Three Years of Political Education Work. From the Materials of the 4th All-Russian Congress of Political Education Workers) (Moscow, 1926).
- [20] See: H. CARTER, *The New Spirit in the Russian Theatre, 1917-1928* (London, 1929), p. 322.
- [21] It is noteworthy that Tat kino's first experiences were in the re-editing and release in the Tartar language of the foreign films *The Diamond Necklace*, *The Circus Rider*, *Nero and Agrippina* (we have not been able to trace the original titles), which were very successful with national audiences. See: Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Tatarskoi ASSR (Central State Archive of the Tartar Autonomous SSR) 144/1/2, p. 7.
- [22] See: W. BRYHER, *Film Problems of Soviet Russia* (Territet, Switzerland, 1929); M. K. ANTONOV, *Iz istorii Chuvashkino* (From the History of Chuvashkino), *Uchenyye zapiski Nauchno-issledovatel'skogo instituta pri Sovete Ministrov Chuvashskoi ASSR* (Scholarly Transactions of the Scientific Research Institute of the Council of Ministers of the Chuvash ASSR) vol. XXXV (Cheboksary, 1967). See also my article: *Volzhskie buntari* (*The Volga Rebels*), *Molodoi kommunist* (Young Communist), Cheboksary, 27 August 1987.
- [23] See: G. M. BOLTYANSKII, *Kino na vystavke iskusstv* (Cinema at the Arts Exhibition), *Kino* (Cinema), No. 38, 16 August 1928; idem, *Kino na vystavke iskusstv national'nostei SSSR* (Cinema at the Exhibition of the Arts of the Nationalities of the USSR), *ibid*, No. 48, 29 November 1927.
- [24] *Pseudonatsional'nye proizvodstva* (Pseudo-National Productions), *Sovetskii ekran*, 1927, No. 7, p. 3.

- [25] L. SHATOV, *K. partsoveschaniyu o kinorabote. Puti natsional'nogo kinoproizvodstva* (To the Party Conference on Cinema Work. The Paths of National Film Production), *Zhizn' iskusstva* (The Life of Art), 1928, No. 1, p. 8.
- [26] In 1926 Lunacharsky repeatedly tried to convince the organisers of Uzbekgoskino that their organisation, still in its infancy, should merge with Vostochnoe kino. See: *Lunacharskii o kino. Stat'i. Vyskazyvaniya. Sisenarii. Dokumenty* (Lunacharsky on Cinema. Articles. Statements. Scripts. Documents) (Moscow, 1965), pp. 270–271. Wisely, his proposal was rejected.
- [27] *Natsional'naya kinematografiya* (National Cinema), *Sovetskii ekran*, 1928, No. 13, p. 3. There was an active propaganda campaign on behalf of Vostochnoe kino in the pages of the film press. See: YA. DROBNIS, *Vostok-kino*, *ibid*, 1927, No. 52, pp. 3–4; V. RUSSO, *Kino—natsional'nostyam* (Cinema—for the Nationalities), *ibid*, 1928, No. 20, p. 3; KH. GABIDULLIN, *Voprosy natsional'nogo kino* (Problems of National Cinema), *ibid*, 1928, No. 20, pp. 4–5. See also: *Puti kino. Pervoe vsesoyuznoe partiinoe soveshchanie po kinematografii* (The Paths of Cinema. 1st All-Union Party Conference on Cinema) (Moscow, 1929).
- [28] See: TsGALI, 2489/1/109, p. 28.
- [29] See: *Kino*, 22 July 1935, No. 29; *Izvestiya* [The News], 21 October 1935.

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