

# FILM QUARTERLY

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# FILM

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THE COVER: Lotte Lenya in *Die Dreigroschenoper*.

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## Editor's Notebook

One of the dourer amusements of film people lately has been provided by the public-relations campaign to reglamorize Hollywood, both immediately as a tourist attraction and in a longer perspective as the focus of the American film world. As a key undertaking in this campaign, a portion of Hollywood Boulevard is being face-lifted: the sidewalks are being relaid—gilded and bearing the names of the movie great—to impress upon the passer-by the legend of the screen's history.

From these names, however, the august city reformers have omitted that of Charlie Chaplin. (He was, after all, "controversial.") And some lesser names they *are* including have been misspelled.

All this might be dismissed as too ridiculous to notice. But it is, surely, a Symptom if there ever was one: of a process in which the genuine achievements of the American film (and in the hands of Chaplin, Keaton, Stroheim, and Griffith these were very great achievements indeed) are forgotten, while a hopeless attempt is made to revive the meretricious glories of legions of hacks, charlatans, stars, and businessmen. What was important in Hollywood has, for the entrepreneurs of Hollywood Boulevard, become completely incomprehensible. What remains, all too clearly, is a group of provincial shop-keepers seeking to make a phony wonderland of their middle-sized, and now quite industrialized, American city.

The present reality of Hollywood—the reality hinted at but largely melodramatized in *The Savage Eye*—is the reality of any such city. As a matter of fact it is a supremely interesting reality; not because it happens to house, here and there, studios and labs, and a few other accessories of the film and TV business (and the few artists and many freaks who accompany them) but precisely because it, too, *even it*, is caught up in the way we live now. Sentimental tears were shed, mostly for publicity purposes, when the old Garden of Allah, hidden behind palms,

formerly the residence of stars and site of wild filmland parties, was torn down to make way for more pasteboard garishness on the Sunset Strip. Equally sentimental tears were shed for the passing of Cecil B. DeMille, one of the last relics of the movies' great decades—which now seem to be taking on some nostalgic appeal as a Golden Age. A stroll around the enormous Twentieth Century-Fox lot, with its derelict sets, remnants of projects grandiose or petty, is supposed to be saddening, and the oil wells and apartments taking their place are supposed to be mourned as signs of the passing of the good old days.

Well, it is good riddance. *Sunset Boulevard's* romanticism and the picturesqueness of certain good directors to the contrary notwithstanding, what is important about any motion picture industry is whether it makes good pictures, not whether it has large audiences or makes a lot of money or supports a sizable contingent of gossip-worthy stars. There is a good possibility that the passing of the phony glamor of the past, of which the current campaign is surely nothing more than a last gasp, will leave filmmakers and ourselves freer to concentrate more on the pictures and less on the flim-flam. And this is as serious a business as a drive down Santa Monica Boulevard, say: along the unused railroad track, past the warehouses, the already decaying motel-style apartments with their pin-curved housewives, the decrepit gas-stations, the vacant lots with their abandoned cars, the fading stucco of Los Angeles Moorish architecture. Even in the eyes of the tourists, standing before the imposing studio façades or purchasing guide maps to stars' homes on Sunset Boulevard, there can now often be seen a healthy disillusion.

On another page of this issue is a note describing *Cine Cubano*, publication of the reorganized Cuban film industry. We await direct reports, but it seems worth saying at this point that behind the dense smoke-screen laid down by the American press, the Castro regime is mounting a film program of considerable promise: there is a group of immensely energetic film-

makers there, impetuous and full of fire, who seem to be in good touch with the larger film world and ambitious to contribute to it.

They will be expected, to be sure, to contribute also to the propaganda necessities of the Castro government, both for domestic consumption and—probably more important—for distribution throughout Latin America. But every film industry operates under some kind of ideological constraints, and at least initially it seems likely that the Cuban film-makers will find themselves with a fairly free hand. If they produce some extraordinary pictures, it will not be the first time that a country undergoing chaotic and rapid social change has been the scene of important cinematic developments: we have in recent years seen such a phenomenon in Italy and Japan, and more recently in Poland.

And in any case we can express the hope that the enthusiasms of the new film-makers will be left free and that their ambitions to rise above the provincial or the politically hackneyed will be encouraged. (Their great interest in Zavattini is surely an excellent sign in this respect.) A vigorous Cuban cinema would be an inspiration throughout the Spanish-speaking world—a world that could use some inspiration. An ideologically sterile and rigid Cuban cinema, on the other hand, would be a supremely visible self-condemnation by the Castro regime. The leadership of the Cuban revolution will do well to ponder the lessons of Poland as well as those of Italy.

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## Leni Riefenstahl

*While the interest recently displayed in the films of Leni Riefenstahl in some quarters may be slightly suspect, it is also true that at this distance from the Second World War we should begin to be capable of a realistic perspective on this woman who has often been called (though without much competition) the greatest woman director in film history—and who made two of the most extraordinary documentary films of all time.*

The name of Leni Riefenstahl will inevitably always arouse controversy in film circles. This article, within unavoidable limitations of historical distance, absence from the scene of many of the principals, and handicaps imposed by the politico-propagandist aspect of much of the subject—to say nothing of the difficulties even at this date of remaining completely calm and detached in any discussion of German history and things German—is an attempt to present objectively and without prejudice a detailed account of the Riefenstahl saga to date. This undoubtedly highly gifted woman has at several points in her career been a skilled actress, and she remains so in high degree. This fact, plus her postwar willingness to give conflicting or slanted press interviews, makes it difficult to find the truth behind the camouflaging clouds, and hinders any external observer endeavoring to form a worthwhile, informed opinion on her place in the art and history of the film.

Furthermore, personal case-histories, always notoriously entangled with much-publicized artistic careers in the cinema, here assume an unusual importance. Many assessments of Leni Riefenstahl in the past have tended to be snap judgments or brief expressions of prejudice, and they have always been hampered by inadequate facts about her films and her work in the medium as a whole. This lack is also one that unfortunately seems to bedevil almost all of those who interview the lady for publication.

The present author's intention of steering a careful middle course between a dull filmography and a biographical assessment has not been easy to carry out. But there cannot be too much serious film history, and perhaps the present basically filmographical approach will be found useful by present or future students of that elephantine, tortuous, bitter yet curiously fascinating achievement which is the German cinema.

Leni Riefenstahl was born on 22 August, 1907, in Berlin, the daughter of Alfred Riefenstahl, one of that city's plumbers, and his wife, Berta. She was an attractive child, and grew into a handsome, strong-featured, plumpish yet energetic girl with a great shock of yellow hair. She was educated at the Berlin School of Crafts, but as she showed early promise as a dancer she was sent for training as a ballerina to the Mary Wigmann School and the Russian Ballet under Jutta Klammt. During the years 1923–1926 she was something of a ballet prodigy and was engaged by Max Reinhardt himself for various dancing engagements in the leading theaters of Germany and other European countries, achieving her first really great success in Berlin in 1924, at the age of seventeen. Towards the end of that year, when she was performing as a star dancer in Berlin, there happened to be in the audience Dr. Arnold Fanck, already famous as a maker of Alpine films. He was to be the key to the door that led her to fame, fortune, noto-

riety, near-disaster, and—far more important—creative release.

Fanck, then only thirty-five, could trace his obsessive infatuation with mountains through time spent in the Swiss Alps for his health as a youth, then as a geologist, later as a climber and skier, and ultimately, from 1919 onwards, in his own words, as “the first specialist for mountain films made at altitudes above 12,000 feet.”<sup>1</sup> His early mountain epics like *Wunder des Schneeschuhs* (*Wonder of Skis*—1920), *Im Kampf mit dem Berge* (*Struggle With the Mountains*—1921), and *Der Berg des Schicksals* (*The Mountain of Fate*, also known as *Peak of Destiny*—1924) all crystallized on celluloid his own personal vision of the awe-inspiring Alps and the liberating glories of climbing and winter sports among them. They had achieved considerable success. His graphic, action-filled, pictorially superb work was in direct contrast to the studio-bound expressionism of most of the other German film-makers of the 'twenties, and it was not long before his work, and above all, the subject that inspired it, became a fanatical

cult with a liberal dressing of unhealthy Teutonic *mystique*. For collaborators he already had a brilliant and fearless cameraman, Sepp Allgeier, and as principal male exponent of climbing and particularly of skiing, Hannes Schneider of Arlberg fame. But although he had used actresses in his pictures, he so far lacked a regular leading lady endowed with prowess among the peaks. Female film stars rarely possess real talent as mountaineers, even in hardy Germany.

However, at the Berlin theater that evening Fanck's problem was more circumscribed. He was planning a new movie, *Der Heilige Berg* (*The Holy Mountain*—1926) for Ufa and was seeking a young actress to play the part in it of Diotima, a young dancer whose passion for the great mountain outdoors reaches its fulfillment when she is wooed by an ardent climber. Seeing the Riefenstahl girl on the stage, Fanck knew that she was his Diotima. This part was

*Leni Riefenstahl with the Führer whose image she helped to create.*



the starring female lead, opposite the former real-life guide Luis Trenker and Ernst Petersen. Immediately Fanck assumed a Svengali-like role towards the budding ballerina. Her part was primarily a dancing one, but it called for a certain amount of elementary rock-scrambling of the kind that Fanck had persuaded other actresses to do convincingly enough, notably in *Der Berg des Schicksals*. Fanck, as usual with him, was not over-worried about the acting side. For him the peaks and glaciers did all the acting that was necessary.

Leni Riefenstahl accomplished with remarkable ease the transformation from the hot, artificial world of the ballet theater to the invigorating snow and air of the Alps. It is obvious now that she was instantly captivated by the new terrain that Fanck's infectious enthusiasm and masterly hand were opening up for her, and before long all thought of developing her career as a ballerina vanished. As has happened to others before and since, active and intimate contact with the strange otherworld of mountains acted as a kind of release mechanism for her creative impulses. In this particular case the conversion was made absolute by her infatuation also with a new medium of expression, the film. Whilst Fanck's contribution to this metamorphosis cannot be overestimated, it seems evident that this intelligent girl's gifts were developed along striking new lines partly by her typically Teutonic liking for the "heroic idealism" of those who sought to conquer the peaks, and partly by the equally typical Teutonic determination she possessed to study and master these intertwined means of self-expression, climbing and winter sports, and making films about them. That the cinematic influence should prove the strongest in the end was to be expected, for it offered the greatest possibilities, but the lure of mountains remains. In the 1959 edition of *Who's Who in Germany* she lists her recreations as "mountain climbing and skiing," along with pastimes possibly more suited to a woman in her fifties, "painting and the graphic arts."

All this is the more remarkable in view of Fanck's bad luck in the making of this movie,

which took more than two years to complete. There were various unfortunate hold-ups on location caused by the weather. Several of the cast were involved in accidents which delayed shooting, often for months on end. Leni Riefenstahl herself was rather seriously involved in all this. Like most winter sports tyros, she found her initial contact with snow and rock puzzling and painful, and on her very first ski trials she sustained a fractured ankle. Later, during the shooting of a night torchlight scene, in which Fanck excelled, her face was badly scorched by one of the naphthalene torches. Fanck, always a stickler for realism, insisted that no proper mountain film can be made in a studio (as Hollywood believed in later years), and he made his actors and technicians share all the rigors, hardships—and the invigoration—of actually working "at altitudes above 12,000 feet." This is doubtless what made his films so memorable: it was only when he descended, both literally and figuratively, into the climbers' studio-built cabins to portray the turgid dramas of human passion necessary to sell the pictures at the box-office, that he lost his grip upon his medium. But in the circumstances then prevailing, these fiery instincts, uncontrolled emotions, and wallowing self-pity had to be shown on the screen in German films of every kind. As Siegfried Kracauer points out in *From Caligari to Hitler*, which deals most perceptively with the Fanck and Riefenstahl Alpine films:

The message of the mountains Fanck endeavored to popularize through such splendid shots was the credo of many Germans with academic titles, and some without, including part of the university youth. Long before the first World War, groups of Munich students left the dull capital every weekend for the nearby Bavarian Alps, and there indulged their passion. Nothing seemed sweeter to them than the bare cold rock in the dim light of dawn. Full of Promethean promptings, they would climb up some dangerous "chimney," then quietly smoke their pipes on the summit, and with infinite pride look down on what they called "valley-pigs"—those plebeian crowds who never made an effort to elevate themselves to lofty heights. Far from being plain sportsmen or impetuous lovers of majestic panoramas, these mountain climbers were devotees performing



the rites of a cult. Their attitude amounted to a kind of heroic idealism which, through blindness to more substantial ideals, expended itself in tourist exploits.<sup>2</sup>

Kracauer adds: "This kind of heroism . . . was rooted in a mentality kindred to the Nazi spirit. . . . The idolatry of glaciers and rocks was symptomatic of an antirationalism on which the Nazis could capitalize." And on the lowest practical level, skilled mountaineers and trained skiers, like those who practiced the parallel later cult of gliding, were tough, fit men who could be useful militarily in due course. Here, too, we see yet another example of the closeness of German films to German life, and the staging of actually performed epic feats and spectacles before the cameras for the subsequent excitation of mass audiences.

It was to this atmosphere, then, that Leni Riefenstahl, a highly attractive, vigorous, and determined girl of only seventeen, came from the stifling claustrophobia of the *Danz-theater*. She opened *Der Heilige Berg* with a theatrical presentation of her famed "Dance of the Sea," cavorting robustly in a dress that seemed to consist only of a series of long trailing ribbons. This expressionistic prologue served to introduce a film designed by Fanck as his greatest masterpiece to date, but one in which he was to come closer to the then fashionable expressionist ideal than in any other. Later in the film Diotima and her lover wander hand in hand through vast, smoky halls in search of the Holy Grail in a confused, doom-laden sequence that might have come out of any of the early German pictures of Fritz Lang, but which showed signs of dangerous over-reaching in the Fanck opus. This and other basic questions of treatment started the rift between Fanck and his leading actor, Luis Trenker, who were soon to come to the parting of the ways, each continuing in this genre according to his lights.

Fanck was patently delighted with his new protégée, for she emerged not only as a real trouper on location and the first woman really to have mastered the masculine world of mountaineering, but as an avid pupil of the art of film-making. Although she entered wholeheart-

edly into the heroic spirit of the thing, and eventually could climb and ski with the best of them, she did not lose her essential femininity in so doing. Indeed, she grew increasingly attractive, and from a sort of lucky feminine mascot of Fanck's Alpine team grew into a highly distracting influence upon precipice and snow-plain which was to cause minor rivalries and upheavals in the years that followed, notably with the late sober Hannes Schneider, who seemed to resent her existence in what was originally his domain.<sup>3</sup> Fanck starred her altogether in six of his most famous movies, all successes, and each advancing her knowledge of film-making.

*Der Heilige Berg*, notwithstanding its imperfections, was a tremendous success, and Fanck followed it in 1927 with *Der Grosse Sprung* (*The Big Jump*), also for Ufa. This little-known work is a short comedy that stands out in the somber line of Fanck's films not only as that rare thing in the German cinema, the self-parody, but also for the way it burlesques the whole fantasy-world of mountains and mountain films. It pokes high fun at the tourists who went to the mountains ill-equipped both in skill and gear for the rather savage fun they offered, extracting considerable comedy from their inexperience. This was Luis Trenker's last film for Fanck, and the stolid, pipe-smoking future hero of *Berge in Flammen* (*The Doomed Battalion*—1931) and *Der Rebell* (*The Rebel*—1933) seemed somewhat out of place among the comedy capers, though he was able to express many a wry, self-satisfied smile in the picture at the imbecilities of the green tourists, each fortified for the viewer by the knowledge that here, at least, this maestro of the peaks was not really acting at all. The acting honors, such as they are, go to Leni Riefenstahl and her partner, the ace cameraman Hans Schneeberger, filling in as a player in what was probably a low-budget production, shot more or less off the cuff, as much of Fanck's earlier work was. Leni Riefenstahl's role was that of Gita, a kind of fairy-story goat girl. Jaunty, provocative, self-assured, she had visibly developed as an actress from the shy heroine of the previous film. Clad

in an extraordinary costume of the combined peasant styles of half a dozen lands (ultrashort skirt, innumerable petticoats, bolero jacket, feathered cap, and knee-boots) she romped through this little farce with her flock of goats, partnering Schneeberger quite delightfully. In England this film was in fact known as *Gita the Goat Girl*. It combines an odd variety of ideas and sequences one seldom expects to find in any German film of the 'twenties. There is an erotic lake bathing scene, much climbing (barefooted) of needle-sharp Dolomite peaks done with obvious skill, thinly-disguised practicalities of mountain-climbing got over with the heavy-handed humor of an accident prevention poster, much perverse fun extracted from the predicament of an animal (in this case a small kid tied to a pair of skis), and some extraordinary surrealistic comedy. This reaches its climax when Schneeberger, as the huffing-and-puffing tyro skier determined to win the race, has himself inflated by his man-servant until he assumes the grotesque appearance of the tire-man in the Michelin advertisement but twice as large as life. Defying all the laws of gravity, he takes off, still on skis, and soars overhead in a Kafkaesque scene to win the race and carry off the voluptuous goat girl. The epilogue is worthy of Sennett, whose influence has never been felt in a stranger context. After an appropriate interval in the mountain cabin (portrayed by stop-motion photography) as the seasons give place one to another, the considerably deflated Schneeberger and the glowing Leni emerge once again into the light of day accompanied by a sparkling brood of miniature Michelin men about two feet tall. Fanck was never to achieve anything like this again.

For Leni Riefenstahl, however, this picture was but a step forward both in public recognition and in skill in making films, as was her next, an obscure Austrian venture *Die Vetsera* (*Fate of the House of Hapsburg*—1928), not directed by Fanck. In this film, which seems to have completely vanished, she portrayed the tragic Marie Vetsera, mistress of the Crown Prince Rudolf of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, who died with him in the Mayerling trag-

edy of 30 January, 1889. She went on immediately to work for Fanck again in his most famous film *Die Weisse Hölle vom Piz Palü* (*The White Hell of Pitz Palü*—1929), which was shot chiefly on and around the noted peak of that name in the Swiss Alps. Fanck showed a commendable disregard for national boundaries when immersed in his Alpine epics: he shot them wherever the scenery suited him best, amid the snows of Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and the Italian Dolomites. In this instance, however, Dr. Arnold Fanck was a name that appeared second on the list of credits. Working for Sokal-Film from a screenplay not entirely his own (Ladislav Vajda collaborated), he was very much the second string, having in fact been brought in only to supervise the outdoor scenes. Studio sequences and the overall control of the picture were in the hands of G. W. Pabst, directorial hands of iron compared with Fanck's arty clay. Pabst, filling in between *Pandora's Box* and *The Diary of a Lost One*, both with Louise Brooks, collaborated freely with the Alpine expert and together they produced a film that was in every way memorable. Schneeberger and Richard Angst added their cameras to that of Sepp Allgeier, Pabst's own brilliant set-designer Erno Metzner was brought in, and the leading players were Gustav Diessl, Ernst Petersen, Ernst Udet—and Leni Riefenstahl. What was most remarkable about this famous movie was the way she had improved as an actress. Under Pabst's highly experienced and individual direction she was here a real actress, portraying the muted, anxious wife of Diessl, the commanding, sullen *Alleingänger*, with power and freshness. Seeing this epic again today, especially its long scenes with Diessl in the hut, one wishes fervently that Leni Riefenstahl had been a Pabst actress many more times than just this once. It is hard to imagine what she might have achieved, but it would have been considerable, and might have led her into a totally different career from the one she was to follow. But by now she was completely absorbed in mountain film-making.

In an interesting postwar published conversation with Gideon Bachmann, Marc Sorkin

(Pabst's assistant director on this film) had some revealing memories of the making of this film and Leni Riefenstahl's contribution to it:

. . . That was a wonderful picture. Pabst worked on it with Dr. Fanck. Later on, they made a remake of it in the studio, with Hans Albers, but the original was shot on location in Switzerland, and it was terribly cold up there in the mountains in winter. Most of the cast and the help came down with pneumonia. But Pabst and Fanck, they must have had a secret sadistic drive: and you can see that in the picture. Later on in the Albers version, in the studio, Hans Albers would stand in the studio and make like he was freezing; but in the original Pabst version, we really froze. All night long we were drinking hot wine and punch, just to keep on breathing. That is why the film is so good: you can see all the harshness of the weather on the faces of the people. And I must say that Riefenstahl was wonderful; never mind what she did later—I know she became a Nazi and all—but in this picture she was driving herself as hard as anybody, and more. She worked day and night. Schneeberger was in love with her—and she with him, by the way—and they were a good team. She worked harder than anybody. Even Pabst had to admire her; he said, "It's terrible, what a woman!" I was all right. I had my old real Russian fur coat with me. And yet I was so cold I had to drink all night. And you can imagine the actors. The action took place on a 30-meter high sheer ice wall, on the slope of Pitz Palü. . . .<sup>4</sup>

*The White Hell of Pitz Palü* was an horrific melodrama of a honeymoon couple stranded on a precipice with a half-crazed doctor (Diessl) who had lost his wife on the same mountain on *their* honeymoon, years before. After appalling ordeals, the couple are rescued by World War I air ace Captain Ernst Udet, trick flying in his tiny ski-plane, though the doctor slips over the brink to join his bride. The picture proved a tremendous success, being generally acclaimed as the best German film of its year, and was put on at the Roxy Theater, New York, being the first German film to be shown there. In 1935, a sound version was issued which had particularly effective music. As Sorkin mentioned, it was also later re-made with Hans Albers and some of the original footage: this hybrid version also was a success. And Fanck's horrendous

avalanche scene has appeared since in several other movies! Most important of all, the serious critics were impressed with an action picture that was at once beautiful and heroic, and with Leni Riefenstahl's acting ability. The discerning *Close Up* reviewer, for instance, wrote:

Here, as never before, is the living spirit of the mountains, vivid, rare, terrifying and lovely. Other mountain films we have had, but we have never had *mountains*—almost personifiable, things of wild and free moods, forever changing. Nobody who loves the hills could fail to be held by this tribute to their splendour. . . . For the heroine, Leni Riefenstahl, renewed and unexpectedly fresh, unexpectedly



*Leni Riefenstahl as Junta in THE BLUE LIGHT.*

charming. A flowing free rhythm, breath-catching beauty, genuine alarm. Not blatant or manufactured, but sensed with authenticity. The star remains the mountains. . . .<sup>5</sup>

The star of all these Fanck films was in fact the mountains, whose grandeur and intimate "feel" so well communicated tended to make even the best human performer look puny and mediocre. Alas, Fanck never matched up his stories with his locales, and even more unhappily, there was no more Pabst in Leni Riefenstahl's own career. Her acting ability, though it matured and quietened, thus gaining a certain power, never rose above the highly competent. This however was unimportant, for she had already entertained a deep love for the medium, devoting most of her time to it ever since, and what is more, she was to exhibit a strong, perhaps even enviable, cinematic sense.

After the acclamations of 1929, Leni Riefenstahl was to act in three more films for Fanck. The first, an attempt to repeat the formula of its predecessor, but made for Aafa-Film, was chiefly of interest as their first sound picture, *Stürme über dem Mont Blanc* (*Storms Over Mont Blanc*, also known as *Avalanche*—1930), and although it did not compare in the imaginative use of sound with Clair's *Sous les Toits de Paris* of the same year, it showed that sound could increase the stark impact of an Alpine picture. Something of a rehash of earlier Arnold Fanck epics, with its human jealousies resolved against a background of relentless, elemental nature, night rescue parties, bleak outdoor shots, Udet's incredible stunt flying around the peaks and the inevitable (but inevitably well-shot) avalanche, this movie used natural sound with considerable dramatic effect. And the trick of using Beethoven and Bach blaring forth from the radio set in the abandoned weather station on the summit had, paradoxically enough, a truly Wagnerian power. Leni Riefenstahl was also revealed to have successfully passed the hurdle all silent screen stars were dreading just then: her voice was of pleasant, well-modulated timbre, and recorded satisfactorily. After dismissing her as being in yet another typical role—"mountain-possessed as ever," Siegfried Krac-

auer comments that the plot of this grandiose production "follows a typically German pattern, its main character being the perpetual adolescent well-known from many previous films." He adds, with warning after-knowledge, "The psychological consequences of such retrogressive behavior need no further elaboration."<sup>6</sup>

Kracauer also points out how much stress this film laid on beautifully-photographed cloud formations, pointing out how the now not-so-long-to-follow *Triumph of the Will*, in its opening sequence, merely carried over this decadent preoccupation with astral sightseeing into the realm of power politics, Hitler's aircraft suddenly being revealed beneath the piled-up cumuli on its way to land at Nuremberg. The Wagnerian influence again is painfully obvious. . . . (In point of fact, "the ultimate fusion of the mountain cult and the Hitler cult,"<sup>7</sup> at least on the screen, has never been fully explored. The easy growth and unstrained adaptation of much of the Fanck-Riefenstahl *oeuvre*, through *The Blue Light*, into the big Nazi documentaries up till at least the *Olympiad* of 1938, is uncannily fascinating and transcends mere individualistic, personal film-making.)

Dr. Fanck then tried his hand at comedy again, and pulled off a delightful success in the charming, light, and uninhibited *Der Weisse Rausch* (*The White Frenzy*—1931), also for Aafa-Film. Perhaps the happiest movie ever to come out of Germany, and certainly out of any country over which the shadow of the swastika loomed, this was originally titled *Sonne über dem Arlberg* (*Sunshine Over the Arlberg*), being shot in and around St. Anton, with the implacable Hannes Schneider acting out his real-life role as the stern "headmaster" of the skiing school there, training visitor Leni Riefenstahl so successfully that she is subsequently able to partner him as a "hare" in the magical paper-chase over the snows in which some 50 crack international ski champions joined. The fun was fast, furious, and frothy, though the idea not new, since as far back as 1923 Fanck had made (also with Schneider) *Fuchs-Jagd im Engadin* (*Fox-Hunt in the Engadine*). This time, however, he really excelled himself, aided by a high-

ly skillful portrayal by his now firmly established protégée, some very apt music by Paul Dessau, and unselfconscious playing by Lothar Ebersberg as a mock-angelic small boy, and two Mutt-and-Jeff clowns on skis, Walter Riml and Rudi Matt. Writing in 1932, Trude Weiss expressed the feelings of many people on seeing this picture:

Having seen the former mountain films, I was always sorry that their serious plots were never adequate to the beauty of their settings. In attempting to match the action with the power and pangs of love, the general result was *kitsch* among beautiful surroundings. One felt the beauty of the places would be so much more enjoyable if unassuming comedy instead of some *kitsch* tragedy were made the *raison d'être*. In this latest Fanck film the old wish is realised. It is really a 'white frenzy' of snow and sun and movement, and a good deal of humour. The best ski-masters of Austria take part in it, and when they 'fly' down the slopes, twenty, forty of them, in swift curves, the glittering snow spraying round them, you too, in your seat in the dark, get the thrill and happiness of a glorious day in the mountains.<sup>8</sup>

Fanck's career as a highly individual director virtually ended around 1933 when he forsook alpine work and only sporadically entered the studios, as with his abortive attempt to further in the cinema the Berlin and Tokyo ends of the once-famous "Axis," *Die Tochter des Samurai* (*The Daughter of the Samurai*—1937), made in Japan as a rather odd co-production. By 1933, of course, Leni Riefenstahl had outgrown his kind of film-making and had found new inspirations. Notwithstanding the many films they had made together, the erstwhile master and pupil, the new rulers of Germany saw fit in her case to forget and in his case to remember that most of these productions were made for Jews with Jewish money. Telling his story recently to the writer, Fanck revealed what happened:

I made my first film in 1919, and my last (*Ein Robinson*) in 1938. After that I was 'put on ice' (*kaltgestellt*) by Goebbels because I was not a member of the Party and had most of my films financed by Jewish firms, as he well knew. But even after the war was over, no German film company approached me again with the offer of making an-

other picture. In other words, the real, good mountain film has become, and will remain extinct. What possessions I had collected and what I had achieved during the 25 years of my work as a film-maker I lost in Berlin during the war. Then, with only a rucksack, I returned to my old hometown of Freiburg as a refugee. . . . All my films except three were destroyed. This accounts for the fact that I am unfortunately not very well off now, and in rather bad health.<sup>9</sup>

There is some pleasure, therefore, to be taken from the fact that this director, now in his seventies, poor and forgotten and living in obscurity, should in fact take pride in the fact that his films above all others should continue to delight audiences wherever its is screened. For it is assuredly the best skiing picture ever made and despite its age won an award at the 1956 Sports Films Biennale in Italy, of which its maker rightly claims it was "the biggest success."<sup>10</sup>

After the feather-light charm of *Der Weisse Rausch* there remained for Fanck and Riefenstahl his most ambitious picture and the one that finally launched her into world film circles, *S.O.S. Eisberg* (*S.O.S. Iceberg*—1932–33), a frosty epic made under the auspices of the Danish Government in Greenland during most of 1932 and co-produced by Fanck and Ernst Sorge (Deutsche Film) and Carl Laemmle (Universal Film). This was a hybrid work, involving much diplomatic assistance from both Denmark and the United States, the use of myriads of Eskimos as extras, more stunt flying by Udet, the enlisting of the aid of the Northern Lights, and considerable danger and hardship for the location team based at Godhavn, north of the Arctic Circle. Apart from Leni Riefenstahl and Sepp Rist, the leading players, the production team included such assorted helpers from earlier mountain films as Gustav Diessl, Max Holzboer, Walter Riml, Hans Schneeberger, Richard Angst, Gustav Lantschner, and at least a dozen others, most of whom wielded cameras when necessary. The stark melodrama of a small shipwrecked party adrift on a floating and disintegrating glacier was almost completely overshadowed by the superbly caught beauties of the Arctic, much of it filmed (from

Udet's small seaplane) as never before or since. In 1933 an English-speaking version directed by Tay Garnett was released. This retained Leni Riefenstahl, but replaced the principal German actors by Rod la Rocque, Gibson Gowland, *et al.* Altogether this was too complex and hybrid an epic to be really outstandingly successful (six script-writers collaborated with Fanck), but from two books published about the film and its making,<sup>11</sup> it is clear a good time was had by all in Greenland. Leni Riefenstahl, now a fully-fledged star, roughed it in the tiny camp-huts with all the men, helping with the cooking, and so on with many photographs to prove it. What is important is that she had now established herself firmly where many a man feared to tread; she was a world-famous actress, good-looking and assured, "a tremendous trouper and a not untalented girl,"<sup>12</sup> whose main pre-occupation now was with film-making, pure and simple. In a semi-autobiographical book published in 1935 yet oddly taking her story only up to the completion of *S.O.S. Eisberg* in 1933,<sup>13</sup> she could write sincerely of "*Meine Leidenschaft – Die Kamera*," "my passion – the camera," and print a photograph of one to back up the assertion of faith in the medium that henceforward was to be her life.

For, in truth, the Greenland interlude was of little real significance to her, since she had already emancipated herself from Fanck with the one film above all others that was to settle her fate as a director, *Das Blaue Licht* (*The Blue Light*—1931–32). Whilst on a holiday walking tour a year or two earlier in the Italian Dolomites, she had chanced upon an old folk legend of the dangerous blue light emanating from the peak of Monte Cristallo, and how only Junta, a strange outcast girl, knew the secret of how the glow came from a cave full of natural crystal deposit. Leni Riefenstahl was entranced with the savage simplicity of this tale and resolved one day to transfer it to celluloid. So in 1931 she set up a small independent production company, with Schneeberger and Bela Balazs as co-partners. A small team shot the film chiefly in the Saarn Valley, one of the most beautiful places in Europe, in the summer of 1931. She herself played the wild-eyed, rag-clad Junta,

"an incarnation of elemental powers,"<sup>14</sup> and the German actor Mathias Wieman took the supporting role of Vigo, the Viennese painter who witnesses these strange events and falls in love with the doomed outcast. The sound on this film was not good, and for some reason the cast chose to speak bad Italian rather than good German, probably to enable the local villagers to participate. This, coupled with the slight story, diffuse script, and the director's sheer inexperience, could hardly have failed to make the final result anything but weak and insipid. Yet *The Blue Light* retains a powerfully atmospheric impact, and remains an intense, dedicated, unique screen poem, "a film of extraordinary beauty."<sup>15</sup> An anonymous contemporary critic pin-pointed its great fault when he wrote "It is the cameraman's film, and therefore not a film at all."<sup>16</sup> Schneeberger met the natural beauties of the landscape with every artifice of careful composition, soft focus, time-lapse work (for the rising and setting of sun or moon) and coruscating filter-handling that gave rocks, trees, water, mist, sunshine, and peasant faces in close-up a magical effect. There are touches of Eistenstein and Epstein in this film, and clear evidence of its influence in the later work of Flaherty, Pagnol, and Sucksdorff. All this intoxicating influences, whilst causing the tyro director to attempt the almost impossible task of making the film and taking the leading role, confirmed in her a tremendous ambition to be a film-maker of originality and power.

This hope was soon to be fulfilled in a manner few who assisted her amid the sun-drenched rocks of the Dolomites in 1931 could have foreseen. In the spring of 1932 *The Blue Light* was released in Germany, and among the many who saw it and admired its director and leading lady, both for her glamor and her artistic skill, was Adolf Hitler. The two were to meet later that year, when Hitler was on the threshold of power. A witness of this somewhat unusual meeting was Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstängl, who nurtured (at that time) the fatuous belief that the best restraining influences on the budding Führer were the presence in the Hitler entourage of himself and suitable attractive feminine company. In his postwar volume of memoirs, *Hitler—The Miss-*

ing Years, he reveals that it was Goebbels who actually made the introduction:

About the only thing which reconciled me to the Goebbels was their unashamed enthusiasm for finding female companionship for Hitler. I was all in favor of this. I thought if he could find another woman it would be the best way of taming him and making him more human and approachable. Leni Riefenstahl was [one] of the Goebbels' introductions. She was in their apartment one night for dinner.

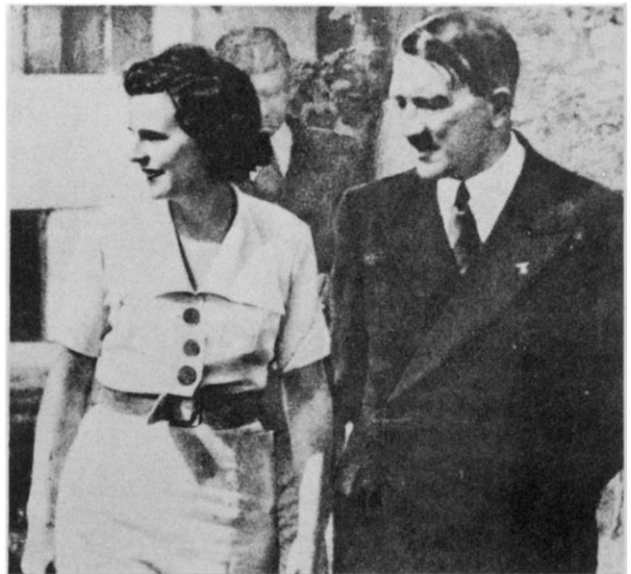
Leni Riefenstahl was a very vital and attractive woman and had little difficulty in persuading the Goebbels and Hitler to go on to her studio after dinner. I was carried along and found it full of mirrors and triok interior decorator effects, but what one would expect, not bad. There was a piano there, so that got rid of me, and the Goebbels, who wanted to leave the field free, leant on it, chatting. This isolated Hitler, who got into a panic. Out of the corner of my eye I could see him ostentatiously studying the titles in the bookcases. Riefenstahl was certainly giving him the works. Every time he straightened up or looked round, there she was dancing to my music at his elbow, a real summer sale of feminine advance. I had to grin myself. I caught the Goebbels' eyes, as if to say, 'If the Riefenstahl can't manage this no one can and we might as well leave.' So we made our excuses, leaving them alone, which was all against his security regulations. But again it was an organized disappointment. The Riefenstahl and I travelled in a plane a day or two later and once more all I got was [a] hopeless shrug. However, she had made her mark and obtained quite a lot of privileges from Hitler for her film activities.<sup>17</sup>

Of course, the dictator may have met her before this—it has been said they first met at the tiny Baltic coast resort to which he frequently repaired in those days—and he certainly knew of her long before 1932. Both Hitler and Goebbels were extremely knowledgeable about films, and the former can scarcely have escaped noticing that *The Blue Light* had won the Gold Medal of the 1932 Venice Biennale.

What is important is that, as Hanfstängl pointed out, she "had made her mark" with Hitler before he came to power. When, in 1933, he became Chancellor of Germany, Hitler continued to enjoy the rapt adulation of the attractive young actress-turned-director; and for his

part, he chose her to make his most important propaganda films and did in fact grant her many privileges not enjoyed by anyone else. It is said, for instance, that she could consult him on film problems at any time, and in spite of later denials, it is clear she spent a good deal of time in his company in Berlin, Munich, Berchtesgaden, and elsewhere.

It is not our purpose here to stir up the already much raked-over history of Leni Riefenstahl's relationship with the Führer: in postwar years she has consistently said "There was really nothing in it. Hitler respected me as an artist, nothing more." Certainly Hitler's own reference to her as his "perfect German woman" merely created a label impossible either to live up to at the time, or to live down since. It is clear, however, from all the available evidence, that platonically or otherwise, the dictator very much liked to surround himself with women who were both attractive and intelligent, particularly actresses, on a tête-à-tête or tea-table level, finding relaxation in their company. And Leni Riefenstahl was of this company, occupying a special place there insofar as she really was a filmmaker and not merely a performer. Hitler was too shrewd a politician to have entrusted important screen political documents to an incompetent, yet on the evidence thus far available—the acting for Fanck and *The Blue Light*—it is hard



*Leni Riefenstahl with Hitler, April, 1938.*

to see now how he could be sure that she would fulfill his purposes in the way he wanted.

What has never been fully explained is Leni Riefenstahl's exact official position in the Nazi propaganda set-up. This may never be completely known. Whilst ostensibly coming under the "Short and Propaganda Production" Section of the Reich Film Chamber of Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda, her responsibility was always to Hitler personally. This is made clear by Goebbels' latest, and best-informed biographers, Dr. Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fränkel:

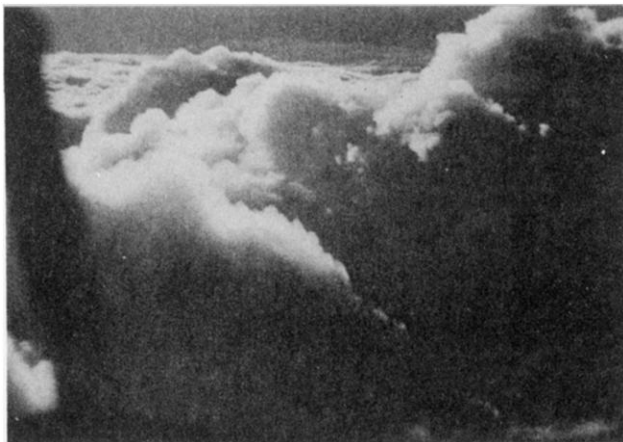
Goebbels' dream of a major development in films inspired by the Nazi regime never succeeded. To this there was only one exception, the director Leni Riefenstahl whose personal belief in Nazism and personal devotion to Hitler were matched by a talent of unusual power. It is ironic that she worked as an individualist with the direct authority of Hitler and had as little to do with Goebbels as possible.<sup>18</sup>

Certainly it was always an open secret that the relationship between Goebbels and Leni Riefenstahl was of mutual dislike, even though she was said to have fainted with joy and excitement (some said she was merely acting again) on receiving a film award from Goebbels' hands on the stage of a Berlin theatre in 1936,<sup>19</sup> and was seen parading arm in arm with the little doctor on the sunlit terrace of the Excelsior at Venice during the 1938 Film Festival there.<sup>20</sup> More recently she has declared "Goebbels was a big enemy of mine."<sup>21</sup>

Leni Riefenstahl's first film for the Nazis was *Sieg des Glaubens* (*Victory of Faith*—1933), celebrating the first Nazi Party Congress after Hitler came to power. A short, powerful, yet compared with later productions a modest piece of screen propaganda, it revealed in its maker great gifts in the realm of editing for maximum mass effect. It was apparently followed, in 1935, by an almost forgotten work entitled *Tag des Freiheits* (*Day of Freedom*),<sup>22</sup> which the director herself seems to prefer to overlook, since she omits it from her own list of her films.<sup>23</sup> Perhaps its subject was the cause for this, for it glorified and was in fact made for the Wehrmacht.

Then came that stupendous masterpiece of film propaganda *Triumpf des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*—1934–35), a "paean of praise" for the Nazi cult that was expressly commissioned by Hitler. Rarely has any film commission been so faithfully executed. At this date, it is unnecessary to try to find anything fresh to say about this film which remains today both an historical document of the utmost importance, and an example of what screen propaganda can do, though it never did so before and probably will never do so again. Its tremendous impact can still arouse almost any audience: even those who profess to be profoundly bored with the whole thing are seldom reacting completely objectively, and must also admit to vague feelings of disquiet when the screening is over, the rantings and cheerings silenced, the banners and torches stilled. What can be stressed is the way it evolved naturally out of the mountain films, also how much the great Party Congress held at Nuremberg from September 4–10, 1934 was in fact a gigantic show staged for the making of this film. The use of cloud effects has already been mentioned; similarly the old houses and architectural details of the city of Nuremberg itself were used effectively in a way that had already been explored in *The Blue Light*. In charge of the many cameramen who participated was Fanck's old aide Sepp Allgeier, assisted amongst several others by Guzzi and Otto Lantschner, also former Fanck collaborators. In fact, behind the 30-odd cameras and in the production staff of some 120 were many names who had proved their worth up among the peaks. Nor can any film have had more numerous or more willing extras; apart from the old city's normal population of some 350,000, over half a million party members and some 200,000 other visitors—770,000 visitors in all—converged on the rally and performed spontaneously before the cameras.<sup>24</sup> We tend to forget, as Iris Barry pointed out, that this Congress was "actually staged for the camera like some colossal Hollywood production,"<sup>25</sup> only more so. Kracauer's description of it as "an inextricable mixture of a show simulating German reality and of German reality manoeuvred into a show"<sup>26</sup> is an





From the opening sequence of  
TRIUMPH OF THE WILL.

apt one. And as Richard Griffith added “The mixture really was inextricable . . . and it was cast into the melting pot by a talent which we must, however reluctantly, recognise as one of the most brilliant ever to be concerned with films, that of Leni Riefenstahl. Let it suffice to say that this woman’s knowledge of the power of editing images was profound, nearly as profound as Pabst’s or Eisenstein’s.”<sup>27</sup> The director herself confirms the fact that film and event were thus intertwined, revealing in her book on this picture that “the preparations for the Party Convention were made in concert with the preparations for the camerawork.”<sup>28</sup>

Two conclusions cannot escape anyone seeing *Triumph of the Will*: it could never have been made by anyone not fanatically at one with the events depicted, nor equally could it have been made by anyone not profoundly encompassed by the medium.

Soon after this Riefenstahl masterpiece was released to every cinema in Germany in 1935, preparations began for both the staging and the filming of another great spectacle, the 1936 Olympic Games, to be held (to Hitler’s delight) in Berlin. Leni Riefenstahl’s great filmic record of this world event, if less of a directly manufactured political show-piece, is almost equally effective as a film, and as film propaganda, and it too has never been equalled. Although variously known as *Olympische Spiele 1936* (*Olympic Games 1936*), *Olympia Film* and *The Berlin Olympiad*, the director gives her own title for it as simply *Olympiad*<sup>29</sup>—in its two separate parts: *I Fest der Völker* (*Festival of the Nations*) and *II Fest der Schönheit* (*Festival of Beauty*) (1936–38). Each half was some two hours long, and this time the principal themes were *Kraft durch Freude*, the fine New Germany, and the personal glorification of a humane, benign Führer. Seeing this film for the first time in 1948, when it was shown privately to the London Critics’ Circle, Richard Winnington wrote of “a brilliant and intermittently repulsive work” though he conceded it was “a complete use of the movie to describe a great event.”<sup>30</sup>

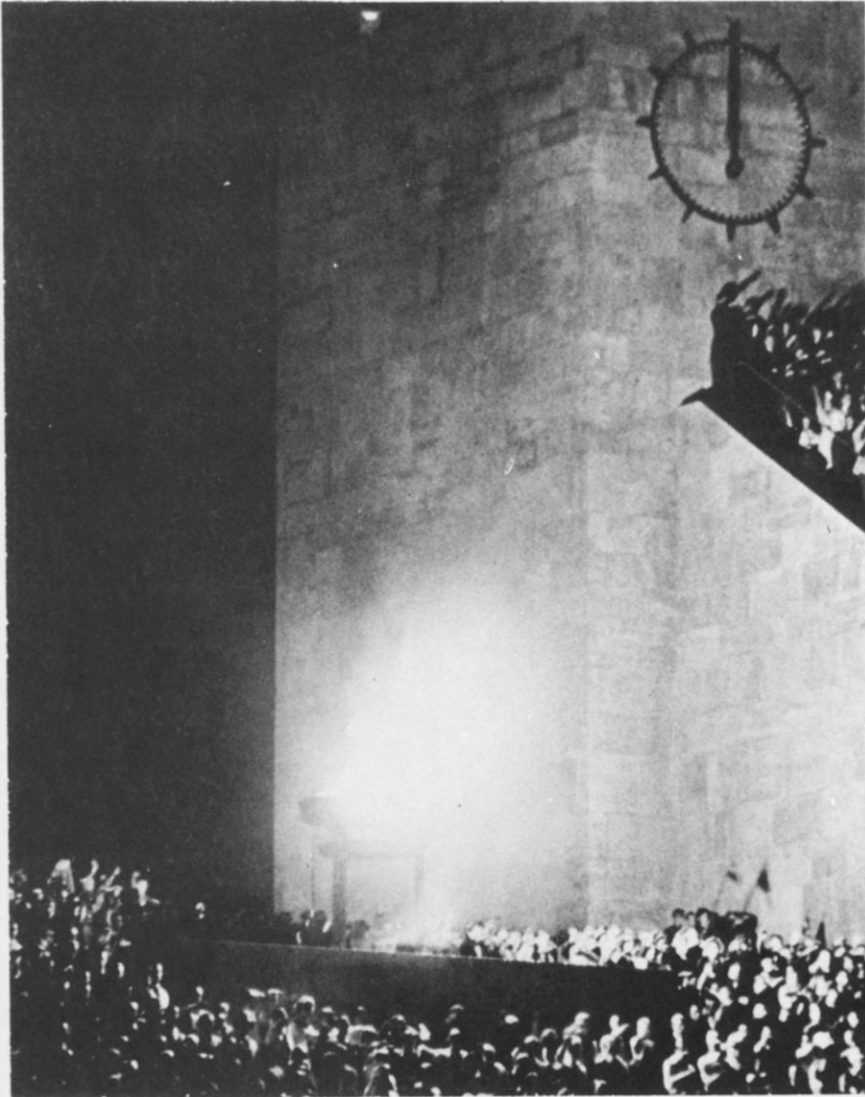
Strangely enough the *Olympiad* film succeeds

on three separate planes—as a factual record of a world sporting event, as a cunning and skilful piece of Nazi propaganda, and as a brilliant example of how artistic a documentary can be. With some 45 cameramen, additional automatic cameras, aircraft, balloons, innumerable miles of stock and plans for camera set-ups that must have taken months to prepare, the picture was made with full Nazi support and is a striking example of what can be done regardless. Again the alpine film influences are obvious: apart from the pretentious neo-classical Prologue which at times harks right back through all the films of the ‘twenties to *Dr. Caligari*, there are the slow-motion diving sequences, borrowed from Fanck’s slow-motion ski jumpers, while the hushed beauties of the opening of Part II, with the naked young men plunging into the misty woodland pools at dawn are scenes from *The Blue Light* re-enacted with gleeful young Nazis intruding. In spite of its imperfections and unpleasantnesses it is truly “a film whose propaganda fades to give its poetry the greater permanence.”<sup>31</sup>

Leni Riefenstahl claims to have edited every foot of this immense movie herself,<sup>32</sup> and the picture was in fact two years in the cutting-room, not being released until 1938. This was partly due to the preparation of very many different national versions for distribution to all the countries that send athletes to the Games. These were in 16 different commentary languages, and skilfully included generous footage

of national triumphs interlarded with German prowess and the almost continually smiling Führer. Ironically enough, the British version never reached audiences in that country. It was seized in the German Embassy in London on the outbreak of war in September, 1939. Later it was handed over to the British Army Kinema Corporation, who cut the epic into handy shorts which were used all through the war (and afterwards) for the physical training of recruits!

Again, Mussolini's Italy gave the movie the Gold Medal of the 1938 Venice Film Festival, but this high opinion was endorsed in 1948 by the further award of a diploma by the International Olympics Committee. The present writer carries away from the rarely seen German version an indelible image of its times and its maker: Leni Riefenstahl, bareheaded, in a long white raincoat, carrying a leather shoulder-bag stuffed with notes, completely absorbed in the immense



**OLYMPIAD:**  
*The drama  
of the  
mass  
audience.*

From OLYMPIAD.

task given her, busy here, there and everywhere, yet not too preoccupied to dash across to the finishing line of some race to congratulate a German runner—an incident duly recorded in the commentary.

These four films represent virtually all of Leni Riefenstahl's work in Nazi Germany. Without the inspiration and the backing of Hitler they would never, could never have been made, and Richard Griffith's well-merited eulogy would never have been written. Political views aside, only one tiny doubt creeps in. It is fed by the persisting postwar rumor that this remarkable and energetic woman, in the corruption that was Nazi Germany, was in fact given credit for achievements in film-making that were not truly hers: that were, in fact, those of Walter Ruttmann. This insinuation smacks of petty jealousies that not infrequently arise in artistic circles, and as with so much that occurred within the Third Reich, it seems likely that we shall never know the full truth. Certainly Ruttmann was the master-editor of the German cinema. His silent documentary *Berlin* (1927) and his sound experiment *Die Melodie der Welt* (1930) are abundant proof of that, and he was assistant to Leni Riefenstahl (in her combined role of producer, director, and editor) on the *Olympiad*—thought not on *Triumph of the Will*. It is also said that he held her in low regard—jealousy again? Certainly he did not think much of *The Blue Light*, which he described in punning French as “La plus grande beauté du cinéma” (*beauté* and *bêtise*—beauty and stupidity).<sup>33</sup> No doubt Leni Riefenstahl learned a great deal from him but to say he is owed the credit she took seems something of an exaggeration. Unfortunately, Ruttmann died in the war on the Russian front, and the other principals are also dead—save one who has every reason for not heeding this particular piece of gossip. So failing the verdict of history, it would seem wisest to give Leni Riefenstahl the benefit of the doubt on this particular point.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that it seems unlikely that she will ever again produce work of equal power to these documentaries. The idol, the creed, the political climate inside



Germany and out—are all gone. Certainly, the Riefenstahl saga since 1938 shows no sign of it. Instead, there is a sorry tale of setbacks and vicissitudes, of frustration and trying to live down the past.

In 1939 she began to film *Penthesilea*, after the play by Heinrich von Kleist, with its blonde Amazon beauties. This project, was fated in its year of production, and was broken up during the beginning of the war. Then, in 1940, Leni Riefenstahl attempted a screen version of *Tief-land* (*Lowlands*), the very popular operetta by Eugene D'Albert, telling of the love idyll of a Spanish shepherd and a gipsy girl, which role she herself took. The film, the story, and the result had marked echoes of *The Blue Light*. Shooting was very often interrupted by war conditions in Germany, and the final scenes were completed at the Barrandov Studios in Prague in 1944, as were many German films of the 'forties. Whilst in the cutting stage, the movie was confiscated by the Allies. What happened afterwards can be told in her own words:

After the war I had to start my own war to collect the negative spread over three countries—Germany, Austria and France. Only with an almost exhausting tenacity could I regain possession and save what could be saved. This Odyssey of my picture could be a picture in itself. In 1954 *Tief-land* could be at last released in Germany from one of the foremost distributors, Allianz. It was a true success in Germany and Austria with the press and public alike. Completely unforeseen, this company went into bankruptcy, and the distribution has been stopped, the export of the picture also. . . . Who-

ever liked *The Blue Light* should discover the advance in style this picture intends to offer. It has been labeled by neutral critics as "timeless."<sup>34</sup>

One critic, Geoffrey Donaldson, described *Tiefland* as a "filmic anachronism" but admitted its fair success on its home ground.<sup>35</sup>

Ever since 1939, when on her first visit to Hollywood she was boycotted owing to her alleged political affiliations, and back at home a captious movie critic had dubbed her *Die Ölige Ziege*, "the oily goat,"<sup>36</sup> because of the slippery way she slid around mountain peaks in her movies,<sup>37</sup> Leni Riefenstahl had realized that the path she had chosen was not always to be luxurious and comfortable. Early in the war, during the German invasion of Poland, on her very first day as a uniformed war correspondent with a camera team, she chanced to be in a village called Konsky when 28 Jews were massacred by German troops in a hectic mix-up. She was so affected that she could not continue her work with her film unit, and complained personally to General von Reichenau.<sup>38</sup> The complaint was passed upwards in routine fashion, but of course nothing was done about it, and she withdrew immediately "from co-operation with war films and films with a political tendency."<sup>39</sup> Her influence with Hitler clearly waned as he himself became the withdrawn and disastrously distraught war commander, and in 1944 she married Major Peter Jacob of the Wehrmacht.

But her hardships were not over. In 1945 she was arrested by the Allies, and her lavish homes in Berlin and later in Munich were seized. Then she was expelled from her home in Kitzbühl, and there began a long series of examinations and court appearances from 1948 until 1952 when she was finally "de-Nazified" with the verdict "No political activity in support of the Nazi regime which would warrant punishment."<sup>40</sup> It was a fair verdict, for she had in fact suffered considerably by the long cat-and-mouse procedure, and to this day finds it hard to resume a career as an independent filmmaker.

The company of "Leni Riefenstahl Produktion," now based on her apartment in the most

fashionable part of Munich, has had many projects and almost as many setbacks since the 1952 decision. In that same year she put out a newly-cut version of *The Blue Light*, with fresh music by the original composer Guiseppe Becce and a new sound track. "It started to run with good success but again the distributor, National, went bankrupt too."<sup>41</sup> The next project was another documentary, *Schwarze Fracht (Black Cargo)* dealing with the African slave trade. Much shooting of this took place in East Africa during 1956-57, in color, but again completion is held up for the necessary finance—at the last estimate DM 100,000. There is another idea for a picture "about tribes of special interest in East Africa, those who have not yet come into contact with civilization and who will be from the optical viewpoint especially suitable for filming."<sup>42</sup> This work seems now to be unfortunately at a standstill. More recently a London producer has been reported as having approached her with the idea of completely remaking *The Blue Light*,<sup>43</sup> and there has also been a report of a newly cut re-issue of the *Olympiad* with all the Hitler footage excised.<sup>44</sup> When the British Film Institute planned to include *Triumph of the Will* in its 1957 German season at London's National Film Theatre, pious protests were received from the West German Embassy, but the picture was shown. The director herself takes pride in the fact that this film and *Olympiad* are regularly shown on the American West Coast, adding sardonically "no windows are broken."<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately the British Film Institute did succumb to external pressure earlier this year after it had invited Leni Riefenstahl to lecture at the National Film Theatre on "My Work in Films" (to be modestly illustrated "with extracts from *The White Hell of Pitz Palü* and *The Blue Light*"). Fearing disturbances arising out of her public appearance at a time when anti-Semitic slogan-daubing was rife in Germany, the B.F.I. timidly cancelled the lecture, but spoke of its right to choose guest speakers without reference to their political attachments. But as Penelope Houston has pointedly asked: "Was it, after all, the 'artist as an artist' who made *Triumph of the Will*?"<sup>46</sup>

*Leni Riefenstahl in Milan, 1952*

Leni Riefenstahl's natural anxiety to resume her much-troubled film career has not been helped by the postwar spate of press interviews she has given, and she might do well to rely upon the memoirs she is said to be writing for the defense she feels it necessary to make. These would make an intriguing footnote to posterity's verdict, which seems likely to be that Leni Riefenstahl, while not a great artist in the cinema, was still a significant and considerable one.



NOTES

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3. See Gerard Fairlie's biography of Schneider, *Flight Without Wings*. New York, 1957.
4. *Cinemages 3*: "Six Talks on G. W. Pabst." New York, 1955.
5. *Close Up*. Territet, Switzerland, December 1929.
6. Siegfried Kracauer, *op. cit.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Trude Weiss, *Close Up*. Territet, Switzerland, March 1932.
9. Personal communication to the author.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Dr. Arnold Fanck, *S.O.S. Eisberg*. Freiburg, 1933. Dr. Ernst Sorge, *Mit Flugzeug, Faltboot und Filmkamera in den Eisfjorden Grönlands*. Berlin, 1933.
12. Paul Falkenberg in *Cinemages 3*: "Six Talks on G. W. Pabst." New York, 1955.
13. Leni Riefenstahl, *Kampf in Schnee und Eis*. Leipzig, 1935.
14. Siegfried Kracauer, *op. cit.*
15. Ernst Iros in *Experiment in the Film*, edited by Roger Manvell. London, 1949.
16. *Cinema Quarterly*. Edinburgh, 1932-33.
17. Ernst "Putzi" Hanfstängl, *Hitler—The Missing Years*. London, 1956.
18. Dr. Roger Manvell and Heinrich Fränkel, *Doctor Goebbels*. London, 1960.
19. See *Saturday Evening Post*, Philadelphia, 30 March, 1946.
20. See *The Spectator*, London, 25 September, 1959.
21. *Daily Mail*, London, 3 February, 1960.
22. See *Saturday Evening Post*, Philadelphia, 30 March, 1946.
23. As supplied to the author.
24. National Film Theatre Programme Note. London, 1955.
25. See Paul Rotha and Richard Griffith, *The Film Till Now*. London, 1949.
26. Siegfried Kracauer, *op. cit.*
27. Richard Griffith in *The Film Till Now*. London, 1949.
28. Leni Riefenstahl, *Hinter den Kulissen des Reichsparteitag Films*, Munich, 1935.
29. Personal communication to the author.
30. Richard Winnington, *Drawn and Quartered*. London, 1948.
31. Oxford University Film Society Programme Note. Oxford, 1950.
32. See *Saturday Evening Post*, Philadelphia, 30 March, 1946.
33. See *Cinemages 3*: "Six Talks on G. W. Pabst." New York, 1955.
34. Personal communication to the author.
35. *Films and Filming*. London, April 1957.
36. See *Time*, New York, 5 May, 1952.
37. *Ibid.*
38. See Gerald Reitlinger, *The Final Solution*. London, 1950.
39. *Daily Mail*. London, 3 February, 1960.
40. *Time*. New York, 5 May, 1952.
41. Personal communication to the author.
42. *Ibid.*
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44. *Sunday Express*. London, 13 July, 1958.
45. Personal communication to the author.
46. *Sight and Sound*. London, Spring 1960.

DONALD RICHIE

## A Personal Record

*Previous to the Second World War, the films of Japan were virtually unknown in the West. The fact that we now know a great deal about the Japanese cinema and Japanese film-makers is to a very large extent due to the residence in Japan, for the last fifteen years, of Ronald Richie—who has served as chief interpreter of Japanese films to the West in innumerable articles and in THE JAPANESE FILM, which he wrote with Joseph Anderson. His experience in this role, and in his work as film critic for THE JAPAN TIMES, has been a unique one. Recently he spent a few months in America, and in this article he looks back on what he learned, in his years in Japan, of the films and the men who make them.*

Kurosawa and I were talking about Mizoguchi. We were sitting, alone, in the narrow, neon-lit bar of a small hotel deep in the provinces, and the barboy was sound asleep behind the counter. Though shooting began at six the next morning, Kurosawa did not want to go to bed. "I don't like to go to bed, I'm a born talker; I like talking, and I like this," and he indicated the glass of Scotch he had just refilled.

"About Mizoguchi," he continued: "People always say that his style is purely Japanese and that mine is foreign. I just don't understand that." He looked at the Scotch and I looked at him. He was perched on the bar stool and was too big for it: he is a big man, and chairs, stools, beds, are always too small for him; the blue jeans he always wears are too little; his shoes pinch and his collar binds. "It might have something to do with what we make pictures about. His central figures are always women, aren't they? And the world he describes, women, merchants, the middle-class, isn't my world at all. Women simply aren't my specialty."

He smiled when he said this, a smile like a child's, one that instantly resolved all of his features: his big nose, his large ears, the small eyes which looked lost in the large, long face. The smile became him; when Kinoshita smiles it

is as though you had taken a hammer to porcelain.

"Yet, of all Japanese directors, I like Mizoguchi best, and after him, Kinoshita. It might even be nostalgia—after all I *am* Japanese, and those two create a film which is purely Japanese." He sat up, now taken with an idea: "That is what makes me so angry about the critics. Of course, they don't know anything—in Japan or elsewhere for all I know. At least, I haven't read one foreign review of anything I've done which hasn't read false meanings into it. But the Japanese critics go on and on about how Western I am. And mainly just because I do my own cutting and happen to prefer a fast tempo and am really interested in people. That's the thing about most Japanese films—they don't really give a damn about people. Then when they get done they call it 'artless simplicity' and terribly Japanese—well, that certainly isn't my way. And, of course, that is why they call me Western. That, come to think of it, is why I don't like period-films, at least not the ordinary ones."

He stood up, went behind the bar, got the Scotch, and filled his glass. "People abroad seem to like Japanese films, but I wouldn't count on it. Most Japanese films lack any real depth—



*Akira Kurosawa, director of RASHOMON, SEVEN SAMURAI, IKIRU, on platform, right; Donald Richie, center; Joseph Anderson, right. (During shooting of KUMONOSUJO.)*

all Japanese culture has this thinness. Even the poorest programmers from abroad often have depths we just don't approach. Are you sleepy?"

I said I was not. "You ought to be. Talk, talk: that's all I do. You know how I work: get the writers together and talk the script, get the actors together and talk acting, get the photographers and crew around and talk production. I spend all my life talking," and he stopped talking and looked at his Scotch. "You know a film I really enjoyed making? *Horse*, way back in 1941."

He smiled. "That was Yamamoto's production and I was only an assistant director but there is no other picture into which I put so much affection. The director is like a grand lord, and the assistant director is like a retainer secretly and hopelessly in love with the lord's wife. Oh, I loved that film—worked on it three full years."

I thought of the young Kurosawa, probably

looking much the same, probably not drinking so much. It was Hideko Takamine's first big picture, and she was just seventeen. And they fell in love—or, at least, Kurosawa fell in love. Gossip columnists never fully decided what Miss Takamine was feeling. Shortly after that she became Kinoshita's property, and shortly after that Kurosawa began a series of films which in ten years made him Japan's most famous director. She became Japan's favorite, and highest-paid, actress; he became the most expensive director in the country; they both ended up at Toho, and they never made a film together.

Now, fifteen years later, married and balding, Kurosawa poured himself another Scotch and said: "You know, one of the reasons that foreigners might like my films is that I really think of my audience as being the young Japanese. I really make my films for people in their twenties—and these kids don't know anything about Japan and Japaneseness, really. Oh, they will, in time. But not now. When they see my films, they aren't expected to know anything beforehand. With most Japanese films you have to know the whole story or it doesn't make any sense. But, I'm Japanese, all right," and he laughed. "Oh, I'm truly Japanese."

Later, in another bar, in downtown Tokyo, Yukio Mishima said: "You know who Kurosawa is like? He is like Dazai. I never liked Dazai—he stood for everything I stand against: you know, terribly intellectual, sloppy, pretentious—he was so terribly pretentious about suicide—really beat. I like Kurosawa though, maybe it is just that he looks like Dazai looked, and he is so earnest—and he is an intellectual. And he is so Japanese . . . you know, of course, there is nothing more Japanese than being un-Japanese about being Japanese. Look at me."

I thought of the opposing ranks: Mishima and Kurosawa and Dazai and Imai—on the other side, Kafu Nagai and Naruse and Soseki and Ozu and Kinoshita. Kinoshita, rather like Junichiro Tanizaki who began by running away to foreign lands, who read only foreign literature, and who ended up the most Japanese author in Japan. "It's the pattern," said Mishima, "Read

*Keisuke Kinoshita, director of TWENTY-FOUR EYES and SONG OF NARAYAMA, with boy actor and Zenzo Matsuyama.  
(During shooting of TWENTY-FOUR EYES.)*

*Some Prefer Nettles, it's all there. That's what will happen to me; it happens to most Japanese."*

It happened to Kinoshita, a small man, finely-boned, with the face of a monk, the slightly ambiguous face of the carved saints in the museum at Nara. His movements are nervous, precise, disdainful, slightly arrogant. It is easy to imagine him performing tea-ceremony, not that he ever does; rather, all of this is hidden beneath a beret and cordovan sandals. He rarely wears a necktie, usually a folded paisley scarf, tucked into a tweed jacket. One expects a pipe, but he doesn't smoke. Nor can one imagine him drinking; he has the face of refusal, a face so under control that it appears brittle, a face somewhat like that of André Gide, a trained face.

"Are you certain you won't have anything to drink?" I asked. Zenzo Matsuyama had brought him over to my house and it wasn't going at all well. He had just seen one of my films, con-





sidered very avant-garde by the Japanese, who have seen almost no experimental film, and he was shocked but was not showing it. "No, thank you, nothing. Very interesting, that film. Very . . ." and he handled the word delicately, ". . . very sexual." Kinoshita waved his long, aesthetic, and immaculate hand in front of his face, as though to dispel the smoke from our cigarettes.

"The film was very cruel," he added, then continued: "Of course, my films attempt just the opposite. One should seek beauty in ugliness, and I would very much like to believe that the true intention of every human is goodness. Certainly one of my intentions is to revive in the hearts of the Japanese the love and goodness which is the due of every aged person." He was talking about *The Ballad of Narayama* which he had just finished.

While I listened I thought of the change which had occurred in Kinoshita. Just ten years before he had been making the most outrageous film satires Japan had ever seen, satires like *Carmen's Pure Love*, which had real teeth in them, and which put Japan's old people in their place, once and for all. Just ten years before he had run off to France, to meet his idol, René Clair. At that time he had said: "I want to live for a while in a country where no matter how poor the people are they at least have heat in the winter." When he returned, he said: "I went to France so that I could see Japan better." Much later, he said: "I feel my mission that of becoming a good Japanese director, rather than becoming a world-famous director."

I had often watched him work. It was like attending school with the director as teacher. He would call over Matsuyama, who usually wrote his scripts, or his brother, who usually wrote the music, or his sister, who was always around helping, or Hideko Takamine, whom he had made the personification of New Japan in his satires, and who was now the typical and retiring Japanese maiden in his later films. Each would receive several minutes with the teacher and I saw why this director's set at Shochiku is always called "the Kinoshita classroom." Most often he talks with Hiroshi Kusuda who is not

only his best friend, but also his cameraman and, more recently, his sister's husband. Kinoshita treats their children as his own. "I am married to films," he once said: "They are my entire life."

"But, naturally," continued Kinoshita, "I do really feel that the motives for any human action are almost entirely on the animal level, that is, the stronger devouring the weaker; yet, I feel just as strongly that perfectly good intentions are behind the most ugly actions, sometimes. Most often, what is behind the ugly action is merely the brute fact of being human."

I saw him often. It was always the same, the distant, courtly bow, the cool gaze, and, very occasionally, the smile, almost a grimace, which cracked his face. I knew it was because he disapproved of me, for I had heard over and over again how my film had upset him, and for this I was sorry. Yet I could not help but think this small incident just part of a gradual withdrawal. His films became more and more just what Shochiku wanted—though ten years earlier Kinoshita was on the carpet in the front office every day. After having fearlessly castigated Japan's various feudalisms, he began to support the family-system, championed it even more firmly than did his boss, Shiro Kido, who felt about the family much the same way that Louis B. Mayer felt about the American Mother. Yet I knew he was not merely selling out, he was important enough now to direct any kind of picture he wanted to. I wondered if it was the pattern that Mishima had talked about.

"Not at all," said Matsuyama sometime later, after Kinoshita had acted as go-between in his marriage with Hideko Takamine. "He is perfectly sincere and if you looked at his early films you would find it all there. *Carmen's Pure Love* is not as satirical as all that. He is just like René Clair, in a way. From now on he will only make affirmations, like *Sous les Toits de Paris*."

"And what about you?" I asked Matsuyama, very political, very left, very experimental, very idealistic, who had done scripts which Shochiku considered so explosive that they would not film them or, if they did, waited years; whose *The*

*Human Condition* landed him in trouble with the extreme right and the Foreign Office.

"Me?" asked Matsuyama, looking much younger than he was, brushing his hair to one side, smiling: "I don't know."

"Well, it's the Japanese pattern," I said: "You take up the Noh or something, and speak sharply to your wife, and simply cannot understand why your children are so un-Japanese about things."

Matsuyama smiled wincingly: "Oh, I'm not so Japanese as all that."

"It's all a question of craftsmanship, so far as I am concerned," said Kozaburo Yoshimura some time later. We had accidentally met at a wedding: Susumu Hani had married actress Sachiko Hidari and the ceremony had been followed by an enormous reception at the Imperial Hotel. "Oh, my, why did I order this ice-cream, I am far too full to eat anything."

Yoshimura is a big man, fat, but fat like an elephant, all necessary. "Look," he said, "what makes anything Japanese, or anything American, or anything Eskimo? It is simply what is done with the material. The material is all the

same. It is craftsmanship, pure craftsmanship."

"You don't mean that only the Japanese have craftsmanship?"

"Of course not," and he put down his spoon: "Look at Wyler. That man knows what the craft is. During the war I had to screen enemy films we'd captured. Well, in Burma we got a copy of *Wuthering Heights*. I kept running it and running it. It seemed the best-made film I'd ever seen—I was brought up on Murnau, you know. I made the most elaborate analysis of it, and kept breaking it down, trying to find out what made it work."

"Wyler would be pleased if he knew," I said.

"Oh, he knows all right, at least I think he knows. He came to Kyoto once after the war—no one knew he was here, he was on a vacation or something. And I learned that he was in Japan, and I ran down to Kyoto, and we spent the greater part of a day together. Of course, he didn't know any Japanese, and I don't know any English, and I don't think he knew I was a director. But we had a very nice day, just being together and pointing out things to each other, and I knew the English titles of most of his pictures, and so I could say them to him from time to time."

"But there is style," I said, adding: "All the critics say you are a fine craftsman but don't have any style."

"How can I," he said, "when the subject is different every time? Anyway critics are all too fond of classifying and making this director only do that kind of film."

I thought about the Japanese directors' adulation of Wyler. Yoshimura shared this with Mizoguchi and Ozu, and a very unlikely trio they made. When Kinoshita once wanted to make a point about the derivative quality of much Japanese directorship, he said: "I'm not like those directors who say: 'William Wyler tried it this way, so I think I'll have a go in the same manner.'" But then most Japanese directors admire Wyler to the exclusion of all others—though Kurosawa prefers Renoir and John Ford. I have often wondered just what Japanese directors see in Wyler. He is a consummate craftsman, but there is a mystique

*Kosaburo Yoshimura, director of AN OSAKA STORY, and Fujiko Yamamoto (left).*



about him, too. He cannot do wrong, not even *Ben-Hur*. With Yoshimura, I know, craftsmanship meant often doing the best possible job with inferior materials: immaculate cabinet-work using fumed oak.

"We've got a very poor tradition for making films," he once said. "After a thousand years, Japanese fiction still lacks dramatic construction—and naturally this reflects into the film. The Japanese novel simply never developed and scenarios are really supposed to be novelistic—more than anything else at any rate. Foreign pictures have a strong structure simply because they rise from a long and powerful fictional tradition. If you make a Japanese picture with strong dramatic elements, it always turns out revolutionary. Japanese intellectuals just don't see dramatic possibilities. Our whole trouble is that we don't really like anything new. Then there is our respect for authority and this results in blind mother love, blind respect for the male, and on and on."

Yoshimura is often considered "un-Japanese" in his actions. Because of this he had the longest assistant directorship of any major Japanese director. He and Kido were constantly arguing. "I never did fully understand why I wasn't promoted sooner. It was said that I was talkative, insincere, conceited. Even today Kido says these things about me. I thought of quitting any number of times. I was the oldest assistant director on the lot." Part of it, I knew, was his own fault. He had a chance, in 1934, to direct a short with Hideko Takamine, then a child-star. It was a comedy but Yoshimura was so taken with the theories of Pudovkin at the time that he created a fine twenty-minute montage which no one liked. But, too, a lot of his trouble came because he simply could not resist bucking the system.

"Take young Hani," he said, finishing the ice-cream, and I looked up, thinking of difficulties, knowing something about the trouble Susumu Hani was having in getting his company to let him make the kind of films he wanted.

"Now, he's a craftsman, but he is a kind of poet, too. *Horiyuji* is a fine film, and those idiot

distributors have been sitting on it two years now, though I hear it has been seen abroad. You just watch him, he is going to go places—if they let him. And now he's got a good wife, too," he added.

His had been the only speech—and there had been dozens as is usual at Japanese weddings—which had said anything. A representative from Daiei—Sachiko Hidari's studio—had stood up and said he was not losing a daughter but gaining a son; a man from Iwanami—for whom Hani works—had said he was not losing a son but gaining a daughter. Yuko Mochizuki stood up, cried, and said they must not forget their old friends. Yoshimura simply said that marriage is difficult enough, but movie marriages are impossible, and they had better not try to make too many short subjects.

I had met Sachiko Hidari years before, at a *Kinema Jumbo* banquet, and it is rather typical of her that she had come alone. (At another party, just like it, Machiko Kyo brought four people to surround her, including that plain little girl in tweeds and sensible shoes without whom Miss Kyo refuses to move.) No one was paying any attention to her: it was before she had won foreign prizes and, besides, Fujiko Yamamoto, or one of the other reigning queens, was there.

We talked about *The Maid* which was then a fairly new film. I told her how much I liked her in it, and discovered that she was one of the very few Japanese who treated me—a foreigner—as an individual. To most, the foreigner is a Foreigner, though he may eventually become an American or an Englishman, but very rarely in all my years in Japan was I allowed to be a definite person, who also happened to be American and foreign.

We met fairly often after that and I discovered that she treated everyone as the person that he was. This talent—and its value is inestimable in Japan—makes her a great actress but it also accounts for her neglect. Someone like Ayoko Wakao, who away from large numbers of people is a nice, simple girl, knows just what tone to use with this person, just how much to defer, just how much not to. Sachiko Hidari

knows nothing about this—she can only treat people honestly.

And Hani, a man—I still think of him as a boy—who stutters and gets flustered in public, who, when I first met him, loved Jean Vigo more than anything else—and who had never seen a Vigo film. I think my main attraction was that I had seen *Zéro de Conduite*. He told me that he was thinking of Vigo when he made *Children Who Draw*, and Vigo would certainly have approved of *Horiyūji*, in which the director neglects every well-known aspect of this celebrated medieval complex of temples, and instead turns his camera under the eaves to show the caricatures with which twelfth-century carpenters amused themselves during their lunch-hours.

I never saw him alone with his camera (he tends to be slightly secretive) but I remember seeing him in complete conflict with the Japanese way, under circumstances which quite approximated what the director in Japan has to put up with.

He and I belonged to the only “advanced” film society in Japan (programs of art films, a retrospective of Joris Ivens, the first Japanese showing of *Les Mistons*) and decided to make an “avant garde” film ourselves. It was to be called *Tokyo, 1958* and was written, more or less, by Zenzo Matsuyama. But Matsuyama went to Europe leaving Hani in more or less complete control.

Editing the film was typical of the way films usually get made in Japan. We all sat around the studio and talked about editing, the cutters working on their table right in front of us. “Oh, this is a good scene,” someone would say. “No, it’s not,” said another: “Let’s throw it out.” A third would disagree: “It’s not so bad, let’s cut it in half.” The completed film was very confused—and I can still see Hani, exasperated but polite, rising above the growing mound of film on the floor, trying to explain how he had envisioned it, trying to justify his intentions. I felt, for the first time, kindly toward the usual Japanese film director, who botches everything he tries—and felt something like awe toward a director like Mizoguchi, or Ozu, or Kurosawa, who

was so strong that, even in Japan, he would not compromise.

Once I took a bath with Toshiro Mifune, on a Kurosawa location deep in the mountains of Izu. We were in a hot-spring rock pool, up to our necks, Mifune in full make-up and a beard, and I commented on the fact that Kurosawa was so strict that he was called *tenno*, or “emperor” by his crew. Mifune said: “Oh, yes, he is strict, but that is only to give him control. That is why he checks everything. He made me do a scene ten times yesterday; and each time he was up there at the view-finder to make sure everything was all right. And after this film is in the can we won’t see him for weeks. He’ll be at the studio, putting it together himself. He sits on everyone, that is why we love him, I think. We all know that we are really making a *film*.”

Mifune always enjoyed himself when working with Kurosawa, they talked together, drank together, fished together—because next to making films Kurosawa likes fishing best. And, with Kurosawa, Mifune was never temperamental—and he always acted. With almost any other director, he loses control of himself, he hams it up. I can still hear Kurosawa saying: “Now, now, Mifune—let’s try it over again, and this time not quite so much.”

I wonder about Hani—just as I wonder about directors like Kon Ichikawa and Masaki Kobayashi (and used to wonder about Yasushi Nakahira and Yasuzo Masumura—but don’t any more: the former is in bondage to Nikkatsu, and the latter now seems to be doing anything that Daiei tells him to). Will he go the way of Kurosawa, or will he turn back, like Kinoshita? “You are absolutely wrong about Kinoshita, you know,” said a man from Shochiku once. “He has only followed a Japanese pattern, and has returned—he is just like Ozu, and I know how much you admire Ozu.” But it is not that simple. Ozu looks at the Japanese way and says that yes, alas, this is the way things are—it is this regret which makes his films great. Kinoshita, on the other hand, positively celebrates the Japanese way. In Ozu’s films the old man is usually left alone, completely betrayed by a

system in which he believed; in the later Kinoshita films, the young rebel always returns home—still waiting, still loving—a sadder but wiser boy. And, of course, Kinoshita is perfectly sincere, but he is no longer in complete control of his work.

He is rather like Toyoda who seems perfectly happy turning out poor imitations of his one really great film, the 1955 *Marital Relations*, or else making the usual Toho comedies. I remember him, small, angular, energetic, sitting on a mat and taking small, excited sips of tea, while he was explaining. “When I was thirty, I was quite idealistic, thought that humans were beautiful. Then when I was forty the war came. Now I view things just from the reverse. Life can be quite ugly but somehow I can reconcile the two, beauty still exists, particularly in the younger generation. Maybe that is the reason I make films about young people now.”

Toyoda is not a severe man, is extremely open, affable, very popular with actors, and is rather unselective about his own work. He reminds me of his favorite actor, Hisaya Miroshige, who seems completely incapable of evaluating his own performances. I thought him excellent in *Marital Relations*. “Oh, you did? I got a prize for it. I’m tired of that kind of role. You seen my new comedy? I am told it is very funny.” Indeed, I had seen his new comedy. It was embarrassing, the way the late Harry Langdon films, and any picture of Red Skelton, are embarrassing.

I had originally won his regard by comparing him with Chaplin in *A Cat and Two Women*, one of Toyoda’s best. Once he told me: “You know what I want to do? I want to take an airplane and go all around to all the countries and make a film with me as star, sort of like Chaplin around the world only different. Would foreigners like it? You are a foreigner, tell me. What would foreigners think?”

What would foreigners think? Or—the big question in the traditional Japanese mind—do they think at all? If so, they certainly cannot understand Japan. I remember a long fight with Shochiku when I kept insisting that the films of Ozu should be seen abroad. “But, Mr. Richie,

he is so Japanese—no one would understand.” “That is simply not true—I understand them,” I said. The Shochiku man smiled: “But, of course, you have been living here so long now that your reactions are, well, are not typical.”

Toei was at one point interested in me and their interest faded away when they discovered that I was, alas, not thought typical. This was, in general, the attitude of the industry toward me. When I would show up for the screening of, say, a new Naruse film (and there are so many new films in Japan, native and imported, that often five or six will be previewed at the same time), I would be greeted with: “You aren’t at *Solomon and Sheba*? Everyone else is.” This would be accompanied with signs of pleasure but, at the same time, there would be indications that they did not know why I had come—they usually decided that I particularly liked the heroine. When Joe Anderson and I were doing our book, we got very little help from the industry. There were exceptions, of course. Without the late Tokutaro Osawa, then head of *Eiga Hyron*, it could not have been written at all. He had a passion for the truth that is extraordinarily rare in Japanese critical circles. A short, kindly, energetic, eternally interested



Donald Richie and Toshiro Mifune  
on the set of KUMONOSUJO.

man, his publication was the fairest and least biased of all Japanese film journals—it no longer is. When Joe was doing the research with Mr. Osawa, they would hole up for hours together, checking references, comparing accounts—all Japanese histories of the Japanese film differ widely—and not resting until they were absolutely certain that this was the way things were.

Then there was Hisamitsu Noguchi, with Towa Film, who—more diplomatic perhaps than Osawa—managed to retain all of his standards and who, simply through love of it, helped us get stills and track down information, who was endlessly helpful with introductions, who was one of the least partisan men I have ever known, who knew film better than all of the film critics in Japan put together, who used to solemnly wipe his glasses, shake his large head, and say: “Tell me honestly now, just what are the differences between *Gate of Hell* and *Abie’s Irish Rose*?”

And we got no help from the critics—though, to be sure, we did not ask for any. One of them, very *grand doyen*, the Bosley Crowther of Japan, advised me—quite seriously—not to make the companies angry. He was very benevolent, very prolific, and very dense. Almost all the critics group themselves around such paternal and intrinsically kindly leaders as these. This means that if they disagree, then all their protégés must disagree as well. There are a few independents—John McCartens who dislike because disliking is easy and because their publications encourage it; there is at least one nascent Arthur Knight, enthralled that movies can move. There are no Archer Winstens, no Vernon Youngs, no James Agees.

Of course, Japan is the country that invented payola. It is all perfectly open. In Japan the enthusiasm of the review does not differ with the size of the advertisement. But the critic who has been well taken care of by one of the companies is less apt, think the companies, to find fault with the products. This confidence is usually justified. Everyone gets presents all the time. Not only do critics often receive copies of the scripts before production is even begun, but they are kept informed as to how the project is going. Then at New Year’s and mid-year they

are given little reminders. If I kept all the toilet soap, towels, and desk gadgets which have been sent me, I would not have room for anything else.

Most often, perhaps because most appreciated, they give money. I did not get too much money because, after all, I was not a Japanese critic, but MGM—by far the best-run of any of the foreign film branches in Japan—bowed to the custom of the country and for years sent me ¥5000 just after the holiday season. I would always take it and then go ahead and say just what I thought. It is to MGM’s credit that, unlike many Japanese companies, it did not follow the further custom of the country and write me pained letters, complaining at my lack of gratitude.

I was fortunate too that *The Japan Times* gave me complete freedom and showed complete trust. Not once did anyone on the staff suggest that I tone down a review, or boost it up. During my years there I enjoyed a liberty which is unknown in other countries. Certainly no American critic can be as candid, as honest, and as opinionated as I was allowed to be—and still keep his job.

Just how rare this attitude is in Japan is shown by my experiences with *Kinema Jumbo*, the biggest and in many ways the best film journal in Japan. Its approach to film is fundamentally serious, and it has enormous readership. One would think it powerful enough to print anything it wants. Yet it has printed some things of mine only after carefully disqualifying them by saying that this is a *blue-eyed view*, implying that the contents might therefore be disregarded. They once asked me to write a rather long article for them on what was wrong with the Japanese motion picture industry. I was told to say whatever I thought true. The Japanese press is great for this and whenever any celebrity steps out of the plane at Haneda, the first and only question to greet him is: “Please give us your impressions of Japan.”

But what *Kinema Jumbo* wanted was a generally critical article ending on a note of reassurance. My article started bad and got worse. I forecast the disappearance of everything good within the industry as more and more films were

made for foreign audiences, as more and more co-productions cost more and more money and brought in less and less, and as the industry allocated its audience eventually out of existence.

I knew something was the matter when *Kinema Jumbo* invited me to supper. It was a very good supper, and over it, I was told, little by little, that they could not possibly publish my article. I said it was all true. They said that, yes, they knew that perfectly well, but it would make certain people very uncomfortable, it would cause the magazine needless embarrassment. Could I rewrite it? No? Ah, then, it was unfortunate, but . . . Perhaps another publication . . . But there wasn't any—and so the article is still unpublished.

The Japanese are multiple newspaper-readers, and usually read anything on the films. For that reason critics are influential, even when the most famous of them all dismisses *The Bridge on the River Kwai* with: "This is simply another foreign view of wartime Japanese atrocities."

Kurosawa thoroughly dislikes critics, calls them jackals because they run in packs, and I know of no director who reads what the Japanese dailies have to say. And it is true that, by and large, they say the same things. Kurosawa is too "cold" or "doesn't understand women," or, simply, "is not Japanese." Ozu is "fatalistic" and hence useless to Japan's "rising younger generation." Naruse is just plain "old-fashioned." Kinoshita, however, is showing new promise because of his "lyric sentiment." And Imai can do no wrong, he is the favorite of the intellectual bobby-soxer. He is just left enough to be "serious" about his themes, and he "speaks for the new Japan." The *Kinema Jumbo* yearly prizes, all the leading critics contributing, reflect this. Each company gets something, Ozu is given something for old times' sake, Kurosawa usually cannot be disregarded, and Imai is given first prize. I was always invited to vote but my choices were never taken seriously. The year I gave first place to Ichikawa's superb *Enjo*, one of the critics who, like all the others, had voted for the new Imai film, took me to one side, and said: "You are not being very constructive, Mr. Richie, here you choose a completely nega-

tive film about an insane boy who burned down one of Japan's national treasures, and you say you don't like this other film which is about what to do with the half-caste children. If you will forgive my saying so, I don't really believe that you are in tune with Japan—but, of course, it is only because you are a foreigner."

And maybe I am not in tune. Joe and I used to worry about this during the five years it took us to do our book. We found that our opinion often was in the minority—a minority of two. "Just remember *Rashomon*," we kept saying to each other. It had been more disregarded than disliked. The public took to it but the industry did not; Nagata himself walked out of the screening room, saying he didn't understand it. The one thing which encouraged us was that the Japanese audience seemed, at times, to agree with us. It liked Ozu, and Naruse, and it would turn out for Kurosawa—it usually liked those films which reflected something in the lives it knew.

And then there were people like Osawa and Noguchi and—even within the industry—some, though very few, like the Kawakitas. He, head of Towa and a top executive at Toho, speaking four languages fluently, understanding, a bit courtly; she, just as sympathetic, free in her opinions, knowledgeable; both of them right in the middle of the industry yet, at the same time, retaining an understanding of film and of people, business-people but also artists. People of this kind are rare—I can think of Ed Harrison and Tom Brandon—I don't know anyone comparable in Hollywood.

When our book finally came out there was absolute silence in Japan—except for the Kawakitas



Ayoko Wakao and Kenji Mizoguchi, director of *UGETSU and STREET OF SHAME*.

and Kurosawa. Then little by little foreign reviews filtered back and it became impossible to ignore it. So we were given a testimonial—Joe in absentia since he was back in America.

I didn't know most of the people there, representatives from the major companies, including one we had pilloried but who had not read the book. But Noguchi was there, serious and pleased, and the Kawakitas, making sure that all went well, taking me around from one group of critics to another. And there was Yoshimura; and Hani, wanting to get into a corner and talk *Les Quatre Cents Coups*.

I was made to make a speech and during it I wondered what they would think if I said what I thought. For, standing there, with everyone smiling and attentive, I realized something about Japan that I never had before.

And that was, that these two aspects of the country, which I loved and disliked: the insularity, the hypocrisy, the toadying, the insistence that no foreigner could ever really understand, all of which I hated; and the openness to any kind of aesthetic suggestions, the strength and determination to go on at all costs, the quiet honesty of the craftsman, the ability to think in terms of essentials, in terms of life and love and death, all of which I loved—I realized that these were the same thing, that one could not exist without the other: that Kurosawa's strength had ultimately the same basis as the critic's stubborn stupidity, that Ozu's closed vision of the tragedy of Japan sprang from the same impulse that made me Mr. Blue-Eyes.

I didn't say any of this. Instead I talked about Joe and about Mr. Osawa, and about how the book, for which we were being honored, got written, and—since all speeches in Japanese end with a summary—I was supposed to tell them what I remembered, what had seemed important, what nearly fifteen years had meant to me. And I could not think of a thing.

It was only later, after I was home and in bed, that I began remembering, and I realized then what had been important. It was Kurosawa up on the shooting platform, smiling to himself as he looked through the view-finder; it was Sachiko Hidari coming off the set almost

illuminated because things had gone so well; it was Yoshimura's face when he remembered that day in Kyoto with Wyler; it was Hani stuttering with excitement when I gave him my stills from *Zéro de Conduite*; it was Kinoshita smiling when he recalled *Le Quatorze Juillet*, and Matsuyama doubled up during a showing of *The Kid*; it was the most venerable critic of them all gasping during *Potemkin*.

There wasn't anything truly Japanese about any of this, I realized: these are human emotions and nothing less. What makes it so Japanese is the pull between the two, between Imai beside himself with delight during *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* and Imai pontificating on how very Japanese social-consciousness really is; Kinoshita idealizing family life in *The Light-house* and, in the same year, making outrageous fun of it in *Candle in the Wind*; or Gosho turning out nearly worthless programmers, yet saying: "I'm going to go on directing until I drop dead."

During the Occupation I used to be afraid that Japan would turn into a country like the Philippines, or like China. But now I saw that it never would, that the very things I fought most against in the country would keep it the way that it is. And this way it would retain what I loved, it would make possible those things I remembered best, and cherished. I remember, on a Toyoda location, watching the director as he moved about the set, then got a broom and carefully swept the vacant patch of earth he was going to use, then stopped, thought, and moved a large stone over a few feet. I remember Kinoshita alone in a dark set, sitting on a false log, looking up at the banks of blank lights and thinking. And I remember, almost fifteen years ago, when I had never seen a Japanese film and did not know a word of Japanese, driving a jeep along a country road near what I know now are the Daiei studios. We passed a group of people who, my interpreter told me, were movie people, either out for a location or else looking for food in the country. And I remember the man leading them, erect, wearing a cap and glasses and carrying a stout walking-stick, and I am certain it was Mizoguchi.



STEVEN P. HILL

# СОВЕТСКАЯ КИНОКРИТИКА

(“*Sovietskaya Kinocritica*”—Soviet Film Criticism)

*For this issue we have asked a student of Russian film publications to survey the Russian critical scene—with special attention to recent issues of the leading Russian film monthly, ISKUSSTVO KINO, whose contents are a mystery to most Americans. We do so in the hope that as the US-USSR film exchange program develops readers may be in a better position to evaluate new developments in the Soviet film industry.*

“Four years ago the party and government assigned us the task of creating a great Soviet motion picture industry—at a time especially ripe for the assignment of such a task . . . in 1950–52 the number of films released annually by our studios could without difficulty be counted on the fingers of one hand. And this caused a long standstill for many recognized masters and closed the way to beginners’ independent work . . . there was nothing on which creative competition could develop. . . . We have made a gigantic leap. We have reestablished the productive base of cinematography, whipped together truly capable staffs, introduced to production staffs of skillful, sometimes really talented young people.”—Director Serge Vasiliev, *Iskusstvo kino*, 1957. 11:63–4.

“The Soviet motion picture industry has reached a high level of development. Soviet studios now release around 800 films annually, 130 of them full-length. . . . Last year the Soviet film industry participated in more than 20 international competitions and won 35 prizes and honorary certificates.”—USSR Minister of Culture N. Mikhailov, *Iskusstvo kino*, '59. 8:17.

“For all that, the mass production line of cold commercial articles has certainly continued to exist. . . . But breaks in its chain are becoming more and more frequent. Suffice it to name such productions of recent years as the magnificent *Poem of the Sea*, *Quiet Don*, *Cranes Are Flying*, *Stories of Lenin*, *Communist*, *House I Live In*, *A Man's Fate*, *The Idiot*, *Fatima* . . .”—L. Pogozeva, editor, *Iskusstvo kino*, '59. 6:72.

As the above statements testify, the film industry of the USSR has undergone and is still undergoing a striking upsurge of activity since the death of Stalin seven years ago. The results realized to date and planned for the future are considerable (especially on Soviet standards, of course, the “pre-Thaw” basis for comparison being so meager): six- or seven-fold increase in feature film production, construction of four new film studios and reconstruction of several existing ones, the US-Soviet film exchange, the Moscow International Film Festival last August, establishment of a National Festival of Soviet Films with annual “Academy Awards” determined by *secret* ballot.

Publishing of film literature, handled by “Iskusstvo” Press in Moscow, is expanding not only in volume but also in depth, covering new fields and making available many Western works in translation. Lindgren’s *Art of the Film*,<sup>1</sup> Manvell’s *Film and the Public*, two of Sadoul’s general histories of the cinema, Martin’s *Le langage cinématographique*, as well as works by René Clair, John Gassner (on the theater), Luigi Chiarini, and Pierre Leprohon have become accessible to Russian readers in the past three years. Among forthcoming books are a large “definitive” volume on Chaplin by Avenarius, a 700-page collection of articles on French cinema, an English-Russian photo- and film-dictionary, translations of Arnheim’s *Film as Art*, of

Reisz's *Technique of Film Editing, of Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting* by "the progressive American screen writer J. H. Lawson," of eight U.S. scripts, mostly from Gassner and Nichols' collection (*Kane, Informer, Farewell to Arms*—but also *Face in the Crowd* and *The Defiant Ones*) and a volume of studies devoted to John Ford, which will include an old article by Eisenstein, "Mister Ford's Mister Lincoln" (recently published for the first time in *Iskusstvo kino*).

Here is a sort of reversal of the direction of cinematic thought in the 'thirties, when the Russian theorists Eisenstein and Pudovkin were being widely read and quoted in the West.

The Russians, however, continue to give most of their attention to the home product, and do a good job of it, in terms of amount of documentation and scope of published works. One such book recently received for review is *Mosfilm*, Vol. 1, a large, quality, hard-cover collection of pictures and articles centered around Mosfilm studios and the film-makers who have worked or are working there. The interesting preface relates the history of this leading Soviet studio from its founding and early development in the late 'twenties to the quantitative and qualitative upsurge of the post-Stalin era. Among the large number of substantial historical and theoretical articles are contributions by Pyriev, Yutkevich, and Dzigan on the art of the director (the latter two, Yutkevich's "Director's Counterpoint" and Dzigan's "Shooting Script," being extracts from forthcoming separate books), a nice collection of photos of Pudovkin tracing his entire career from youth to his last films, with many production stills of the master at work, articles on the comeback of Ilyinsky, the old time comedian, on the latest developments in makeup, a translation from the ubiquitous French critic Sadoul, and others too numerous to mention. Future volumes of *Mosfilm*, to appear on an irregular basis, are to be looked forward to.

Two other Soviet film studies received for review are 200–250-page paperback monographs on the Ukrainian directors Alexander Dovzhenko (1894–1956) and Igor Savchenko

(1906–50). These are two of a series of brochures entitled "Masters of Film Art" (Bondarchuk, Yutkevich, and Kalatozov are to be covered this year) very similar to the French series "Classiques du Cinéma." Each brochure consists of several chapters on the film-maker's career, describing in detail and in chronological order his films, with considerable emphasis on the political and sociological interpretation thereof. Little is said about the director's life outside of motion pictures and criticism, so that, for instance, one does not learn how or exactly when the 44-year-old Savchenko died.

Each of the two volumes concludes with 25–30 pages of stills (where we see a charming shot of the young Dovzhenko in his only acting role, as a righteous proletarian train fireman in his own cloak-and-dagger thriller *Diplomatic Courier's Pouch*) and with a very detailed filmography. Compilation of the latter is not so difficult in the low production conditions of the USSR, where Dovzhenko's credits total only 14 films, from the early comedy shorts *Little Basil the Reformer* and *Fruits of Love* ('26) to *Michurin* ('48). (*Poem of the Sea* was finished by others after Dovzhenko's death.) Savchenko's credits surpass his fellow Ukrainian's by one—a total of 15 pictures, including shorts and scripts directed by others. The Dovzhenko volume also includes a meticulous bibliography, running to 20 pages, of his published writings.

An important place in Soviet film study is occupied by the "literary scenario," and frequently a collected volume of some writer's scripts will appear in print (e.g., Dovzhenko's complete works in three volumes). General historical studies include S. Ginzburg's on the Soviet animated film; a three-volume "Outline of the History of Soviet Motion Pictures" now being completed; a 600-page pictorial history of the Soviet screen (*Iskusstvo millionov*); histories of cinema in the Ukraine and other union republics. Ambitious works planned for the future include a large encyclopedia along the lines of the new Italian *Filmlexicon* and possibly an industry newspaper.

At present there are three annuals: *Voprosy*

*kinoiskusstva* (theoretical), *Ezhegodnik kino* (yearbook of film production), and *Iz istorii kino* (historical). Among journals are two technical monthlies for the film and TV technician and for the projectionist, a pictorial biweekly (*Sovetsky ekran*), and the big general monthly *Iskusstvo kino* (hereafter, *IK* for short) to be discussed below. The Russian film public, thus, after suffering through a dearth of both films and writing about films in the Stalinist artistic depression, is finally beginning – quantitatively speaking, at any rate—to get them.

Everything mentioned heretofore is in Russian, and so of very limited accessibility in the linguistically isolationist United States as well as elsewhere. The Soviets have therefore helpfully done a few translations of their own into English, of books by Eisenstein and Cherkasov and of *Soviet Film*, a new English-language pictorial monthly (available also in French, German, Spanish, Arabic, and Russian editions), devoted to newly released Soviet movies.<sup>2</sup>

*Soviet Film* is the Russian attempt at a Hollywood studio's publicity brochure of coming attractions, and is aimed at the general public rather than the serious film student, for whom its only value lies in making available cursory material on new Soviet pictures.

Similar in format and content to the preceding is *Sovetsky ekran* ("Soviet Screen"), a popular (circ. 250,000) pictorial biweekly in Russian.<sup>3</sup> Intended for the home audience, it calls a spade a spade in reviewing bad Soviet films, and also includes interesting articles on the careers of veteran film-makers, sketches of cinema history in the other socialist states, a crossword puzzle, and a readers' column.

The USSR's serious film journal is *Iskusstvo kino* ("Art of the Cinema").<sup>4</sup> In authority (the official organ of the Ministry of Culture and the Film Industry Workers' Union), in content and approach (theoretical-historical-critical), and in circulation (19,760 at the end of last year), *IK* is the Soviet equivalent of *Sight & Sound*. Considering that *Sight & Sound* is a quarterly, its circulation of 16,000 (= 64,000 per year) falls far below that of *IK* (around 237,000 annually). Yet it should be remembered that, in the USSR,

*IK* enjoys a monopolistic position in its field, while England has at least three serious journals. Since *IK* is intimately connected with the film industry as well as with official government policy-making, a study of the contents of recent issues reveals a great deal about all aspects of cinema in the Soviet Union.

For such a large format—160 8x10" pages, much in small print—*IK* is very readably and carefully printed.<sup>5</sup> The paper is not too substantial, however, nor is the reproduction of stills too sharp. The covers—with the exception of No. 10 last year, a very striking impressionist sketch of a man on the moon—are not particularly eye-catching.

Each issue includes many articles of considerable length (up to 15–20 pp.), plus a full-length, as yet unfiled "literary scenario" of 30–50 pages. Each issue has at least one theoretical article which belongs almost as much to a magazine of Communist moral and educational theory as to a film journal, and as often as not the lead article is a reprinting or discussion of a party decree on the relation of socialist art to reality. About twenty pages are given to "Critical Survey," usually handled by a single critic, different each issue, who reviews under one heading several new pictures with something in common. The film production of a union republic (e.g., Georgia, the Ukraine, Azerbaijan) or of another country in the "socialist camp" (often Red China) usually has a long article each month.

Other regular departments include letters from readers; complete credits of all new films including shorts; a new column for amateur movie-makers (primarily those concerned with technical and industrial topics); book reviews and long extracts from books to be published; detailed information about past and future meetings of film-makers and scholars; articles and briefs on world cinema and on forthcoming Soviet releases; a satire column (*feuilleton*), the best of which, by Alexander Latsis, lampoons a fictional Soviet bureaucrat obsessed with the idea of retitling all foreign films.

In the historical line, *IK* publishes articles by film-makers like Dziga Vertov (often for the

first time and/or posthumously), or reminiscences by or about some of the old masters, such as Vishnevsky's work on *We Are from Kronstadt* or Tissé's newsreel activity in the midst of the civil war, outlines for unfinished scripts—e.g., the late Dovzhenko's *In the Depths of the Cosmos* on a flight to Mars; and collections of old documents, pictures, and correspondence, such as one about the making, in consultation with jet-propulsion pioneer Tsiolkovsky, of a picture on a trip to the moon, directed and written by Basil Zhuravlev and the famous literary critic Victor Shklovsky in the early 'thirties. Frequently, however, the historical materials are devoted to the economic and political side of the pre-revolutionary Russian cinema and to its nationalization two years after the Revolution; one such article (by a Ph.D. in history) analyzes in detail all the documents relating to the one and only film made and shown on Lenin's direct order—about hydraulic peat extraction.

An interesting aspect of *IK*'s contributors, reflecting its status as organ of the Film Workers' Union, is the presence of several film-makers on the 12-member editorial board: among others, feature directors Ivan Pyriev and Serge Yutkevich, documentary-makers Eli Kopalin and Roman Karmen, and writers A. Zguridi, M. Papava, and M. Smirnova. And these are not "honorary" members either—they contribute frequent reviews and theoretical articles and discuss their own work, as do many others in the industry. For example, in issue 6 of last year director Gregory Roshal wrote a 10-page review of recent productions of the Kazakh union republic and director Michael Romm wrote 16 pages on the theory of editing (most of the latter, incidentally, is a reworking of Eisenstein's analysis of literary works as if they were written for the screen). The preceding issue contains articles by Pyriev and J. Heifitz, two directors "defending" their latest works. Pyriev gave a lengthy and extremely illuminating explanation of why and how he went about interpreting Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*, taking "the corrupting power of money" as his central theme. He related how he finally chose two unknowns for the key roles after having given up the script, which

he had written back in '47, because at first he couldn't find suitable performers (perhaps also because Dostoyevsky was given a wide berth generally in the Soviet Union until "the Thaw" when he regained his pre-1930 literary status).

Thus we may suppose that *IK* serves as a good reflection of the viewpoints of the film-makers themselves, unlike the U.S. situation where film journals generally reflect independent criticism. Nor, at the same time, is *IK* free of policy-making: it is the instrument used to communicate to the film-makers official party and government policy and also the policies decided upon by the heads of the industry. This feeling is evident in many articles, perhaps most directly stated by critic V. Razumny:

"... film criticism and theory certainly cannot restrict themselves to simple observation of the esthetic imperfection of individual films. *Their task is not passive recording of facts, but effective interference in the practice of film art.*" (*IK* '59.4:125; italics mine).

This illustrates *IK*'s heterogeneous nature: aside from the normal duties of a serious film journal, it also fulfills those of official spokesman for the Communist Party and the Ministry of Culture, sounding board for the Film Workers' Union (in effect, the entire industry), and clearing house for information on technical and educational films and filmstrips intended for industrial or school distribution. And now it is taking on a new duty: in response to a suggestion from a group of workers, *IK* encourages its readers to submit stories, outlines, facts, and ideas for future films, all of which it will forward to studio script departments, publishing the best itself in a new department called "Attention Comrade Film-makers!"

Evidently all that is now missing is a gossip column! It seems likely that eventually *IK*'s make-up will become too unwieldy and it will be split into at least two monthlies of more limited scope. The suggestion at a recent conference of the creation of a cinema newspaper is indicative of this trend.

In *IK* generally there is a good deal of freedom for expression of views and controversy,

although criticism, whether on the theoretical or the critical level, does not touch basic Communist philosophy but rather the ways in which it can best be expressed cinematically. To quote Mark Donskoy, the Ukrainian director:

“Our enemies abroad ‘accuse’ us of being propagandists of communism. Yes, we are conscious propagandists of communism. This penetrates all our feelings and actions. By our creations we serve the cause of the party; we cannot conceive our life differently.” (*IK* '57.11:11.)

A very spirited controversy enlivening recent issues of *IK* was stirred up by prose and screen writer Victor Nekrasov when he criticized Dovzhenko’s posthumously filmed script *Poem of the Sea* for being overdone, too poetic and generalized, for the unlikely coincidence on which the plot was built, and for the impossibility of audience identification. The explosion of angry rebuttals defending the film as a masterpiece, plus some taking a middle ground or siding with Nekrasov, were so numerous that *IK* set up a special section “On Artistic Principles, Views, and Tastes” to accommodate them. The controversy lasted several months. All kinds of theoretical and aesthetic arguments were utilized by the contributors in asserting their own points of view, and the main upshot of the debate, as stated by the editors, was proof that “Ideological unity of artists who see the goal and meaning of their lives and creative work in the struggle for communism does not in any way demand uniformity of artistic means. . . . Socialistic art is as many-colored as the solar spectrum.” (*IK* '59.10:46.) In recent issues there have been many such statements mentioning approvingly the variety of genres and techniques in contemporary Soviet film-making.

Last year *IK* began a new department, “International Tribune,” with letters from Jay Leyda and Jean Renoir, among others, in reply to an earlier article (which appeared later in English translation: *Sight & Sound*, Summer '59) by Gregory Kozintsev on “The Deep Screen,” espousing humanism and international exchange of ideas among film-makers.

Letters from readers often contain complaints or suggestions. There was an amusing case of a

reader who sent in an eloquent outline for a documentary on the Siberian wilderness with all its natural beauty. This was duly forwarded to the head of the scenario department of the Moscow Popular-Science Film Studio only to have it flatly rejected with the answer that those regions had already been reflected in several films. *IK* retaliated by printing this rejection note with



these comments: “What an excuse! . . . a typical bureaucratic document. . . . Perhaps the Film Production Administration will look differently at this sensible and timely suggestion?” (*IK* '59.10:158.)

This spirit is found also in the organization of production at the chief Soviet studio, Mosfilm. Last year the national policy of industrial and agricultural decentralization penetrated to Mosfilm, which was subdivided into three “Production Groups” (*tvorcheskiiyeh obyedinenia*) under a General Director (V. Surin) who is responsible directly to the Minister of Culture. The general director is assisted by a board of leading film-makers which discusses major policy questions. The three Production Groups, headed respectively by Alexandrov, Pyriev, and

Romm, each assisted by a council of co-workers, include all responsible members of production units. According to Romm, "all basic artistic problems will be decided within the group," which will make eight-ten films per year in his case, probably with permanent production units. Each group will operate on a self-supporting basis, paying for studio space, sets, and props.

The Mosfilm reorganization does not necessarily signify corresponding "liberal" trends in all parts of the Soviet motion picture industry. Another of Khrushchev's recent important reforms, to combine work experience with college-level education, has been introduced into the All-Union State Motion Picture Institute (VG-IK), the training ground of future film-makers. Henceforth two years' work experience is required for admission to the Institute. Also scripters and set designers have to defend their thesis projects on the screen, students will build their own sets, and correspondence study is considerably expanded.

The freedom to criticize and suggest enjoyed by the public (through the letters column of *IK*) also extends to other fields. One of *IK*'s frequent features is a "Round Table"—twenty pages of discussion excerpted from a stenographic recording of meetings organized by the editors. Once last year (issue 4) the participants in such a round table, together with some prominent film-makers, were Moscow factory workers, and most of the discussion consisted of the workers' opinions on what was wrong with the portrayal of industry and its workers in Soviet films! In July '59 the editors arranged a trip for several film-makers to visit collective farms around Riazan to study the life there and talk with the inhabitants.

Thus it is evident that there are many tangible forms of pressure on Soviet film-makers, from below as well as from above. How do they find time to fulfill all their duties? The answer is that Soviet film production is still only 50 per cent of ours (at the feature level), with the result that many directors—and other film workers—at any given time have no project to work on, the most common complaint being of course the lack of good scripts. From his production group at

Mosfilm, Alexandrov in a recent issue mentions Roshal, Bondarchuk, Room, Stroyeva, Pronin, Saakov, Trakhtenberg, and two freshman directors—a total of nine—all looking for scripts at the moment, and names ten directors who *are* working on pictures. Therefore there is no lack of time for writing and other activities concerned with filming, including teaching, a task which some film-makers perform at VGIK along with their other duties.

Many as yet unresolved problems and obstacles encountered in the rebuilding of the Soviet film industry are candidly discussed in the pages of *IK*. Those which will be most easily overcome relate undoubtedly to technical proficiency and personnel. The documentary and newsreel field is admittedly suffering seriously from inadequate and out-dated sound recording equipment, the upshot being that most factual films have to be post-synchronized in the studio (*IK* '59.10:135-9). Film copies exhibited in theaters are often hazy, and the quality of color film, especially positive, is very low ('59.8:124).

The personnel shortage is felt most keenly at the script level, especially in the newer studios. An example is the Ukrainian Odessa studio, whose young directors have recently turned out some good (and some very bad) first or second pictures, all of which were discussed in the "Round Table" ('58.6:1-15). Some of the main complaints which were brought up concerned the position of screen writers, most of whom were free-lance and consequently were not given any schooling by the studio; the logical solution was proposed: the establishment of a scenario workshop with a permanent staff of writers (improvements in this line have also been considered for Mosfilm).

Russian movies are commonly criticized for failings arising from another source: ideological content. To quote theorist V. Razumny from an article, "The Ethical and the Esthetic," in which he clearly expounds the Communist theory of art: ". . . *the artist of socialist realism is first of all a politician, who knows how to approach political generalizations through an ethical collision . . .*" (*IK* '59.4:33; italics his).

In numerous reviews this necessity for generalization from little events and average citizens, for reading didactic, political significance into them, is an important factor in the evaluation of a film. A special terminology exists for labeling these aspects of film-making: *masstabnost*, "scope," "large-scale-ness," indicates the proper breadth of generalization; its opposite, *melkotiemyeh*, translates beautifully as "petty themery," i.e., concentration on the theme of "the little man" and his problems as individual phenomena without social implications. By the way, these "little people," the plague of Soviet Marxist critics in recent years, are straight out of Italian neorealism, which has exerted a marked influence — not entirely appreciated — on film-making in the USSR. It is interesting to note in passing that the great controversy around Nekrasov's criticism of *Poem of the Sea* centered on his charge of *illustrativnost*, i.e., that the characters are too generalized and schematic, too much above the average of the little man, for audience identification.

One critic, N. Klado, distinguishes "theme" and "idea"—the former being what a film is about, the latter "what it fights for, a reflection of the author's individual attitude to reality and life." Nowadays the theme is giving the most trouble—there is too little variety of genres: "Scientific workers justly complain that insignificantly few films are devoted to their lives and work . . . the majority of our comedies are made, alas, on a low artistic level. . . . The science fiction film has been almost forgotten. . . . Lack of system and haphazardness reign in the production of musicals . . ." says critic I. Rachuk ('59.10:49–50).

The most serious laggard is the comedy (including the musical comedy), which understandably is a rather dangerous field in the USSR—you have to be careful what you are poking fun at. Recently there has been an attempt by writer Mdivani and director Lukinsky at creating a series of comedies whose hero, "Ivan Brovkin," is a likable bumbler always in some sort of hot water. The second in the series—on collective farming of the virgin lands of Siberia—was panned by critics for losing the

freshness and charm of the original—on army life—while adding a stilted, conflictless plot. At the same time the need for good contemporary comedies is stressed constantly in *IK*, and when one does come off well, it is very warmly received.

Not only comedies but all genres of Soviet cinema experience the most trouble in treating the *contemporary* scene. The new column of *IK* inviting readers' contributions for scripts requires that they must "disclose what is characteristically *new* in Soviet life in the period of developed construction of communism." A major problem in working with contemporary subject matter is the characterization, where an elusive balance between generalization and humanization must be achieved. Heroes must be more than the neorealistic little man, but cannot be "angelic" mouthpieces for communist slogans and nothing else.

Heroes are not the only personages threatened with stereotyping. *IK*'s critics in many films manage to find a heavy—like one spy, "always smiling ominously, eyes flashing, cursing under his breath, and besides committing such ridiculous, naively childish acts . . . that you're simply baffled that he isn't exposed at the first step." ('59.9:75.)

Other stereotyped characters include the good-bad young man who redeems himself through an act of heroism at a big construction project or in the virgin lands, abandoned children who are taken in by good people, or the local Communist Party chairman, who is usually a *deus ex machina* humanized by having him "do a dance with the leading milkmaid," according to writer A. Levada. He goes on to say that "it is time to say good-bye to the idea of the literary process as the mechanical swinging of a pendulum from a person's productive occupation to the intimate relations of his home life, and back again." (*IK* '59.6:101.) Rachuk, quoted above, explains that the real "positive hero is not a homunculus, developed in the quiet of the writer's laboratory, he must be seized from the stormy current of life, must act in the thick of the people, absorbing its best qualities—will, wit, clearness of purpose."

If the Soviet hero is to be a flesh and blood character drawn directly from reality, then what about his love life? In the past this has generally been avoided: "Our film-makers . . . shamefully raise the lens to the clouds at the moment when the hero pulls the heroine to his breast." (*IK* '59.4:131.) Not long ago *Sovetsky ekran* conducted a discussion on how much love can be shown on the screen. The problem lies in making love an integral part of the story and the hero's character (as in *The Cranes Are Flying*), not "an auxiliary device brought in to pep up the plot" like the cheap eroticism in Western films which Soviet critics constantly deride. In any case, the need for showing this side of human emotions is recognized by critics and readers, one of whom writes: "Why don't our movie masters show Romeo and Juliet in a new light? Don't we know how to love passionately? Work and love must be inseparable. The person who knows how to work well and beautifully, will also love well and beautifully." (*IK* '59.9:137.) It will be interesting to see what results will come of the debating of these issues in the press, although it is doubtful that *IK* will ever start publishing glamor shots among its portraits of actors and actresses.

In spite of deep concern with ideological-didactic elements in the cinema, *IK* articles do pay great attention to artistic questions, and take special care to commend well-made pictures. Also very important to note is the recent organization of annual "Academy"-type awards for many categories of films and individual creative roles, behind and in front of the camera.

Outstanding films are discussed at length in separate articles; e.g., Tikhomirov's *Eugene Oregin* and Roshal's *Bleak Morning* (No. 7 last year) and a "Round Table" symposium (No. 5) devoted entirely to Bondarchuk's *A Man's Fate*, which was later to win the Grand Prize at the Moscow Festival.<sup>6</sup> Bondarchuk was particularly lauded for his directorial ability to integrate his own acting role into the story, while cameraman V. Monakhov was credited with some fine scenes, such as the German plane's attack on the hero's car. Serge Yutkevich commended Bon-

darchuk for showing an individual style in his direction. One of the few complaints was voiced by *IK* editor Pogozheva, on the lack of humor.

Special articles are occasionally devoted to a performer, such as the somewhat overenthusiastic praise ('59.7:84-8) lavished on the promising young Ukrainian actress Zinaida Kiriienko, who has had important roles in several big pictures recently (*Poem of the Sea*, *A Man's Fate*, *Thieving Magpie*, etc.). However, there is nothing like the preoccupation with stars—at the expense of other film-makers—which handicaps such journals as *Films in Review*.

Generally speaking, reviews give attention to the different creative occupations proportionate to the order in which all credits are listed in Soviet film publications: script writer, director, cameraman, art director, composer, with actors perhaps coming after the director in importance. Note that no credits (or annual awards) are given for editing. In the USSR the actual cutting and splicing is done by *montazhnitsy* (women), but apparently at the order of the director. It is interesting that there is little discussion of editing in reviews, although there are occasional complaints that a picture seems fragmentary. At a conference of cameramen and art directors one participant observed that "lately many pictures are very badly edited," indicating that this phase of film production, once so highly developed in the Soviet Union, now finds itself in a state of neglect.

The "Critical Survey" for issue 9 of last year made novel reading through critic Y. Haniutin's wittily described experiment of attending every new feature—good or bad—shown at one theater during two months. (He had been prompted by a poll of four film-makers and a critic, not one of whom had seen half of the approximately 100 features produced the previous year.)

In a serious (and courageous) mood he speaks about the cliché of the "sharp upturn" of film production in the union republics (usually pampered by Russian critics) and reminds us that "behind individual successes we sometimes forget about the general level of pictures which still does not satisfy even the gentlest demands."



Haniutin's summary of results is very enlightening, as are his conclusions. For one month, out of eight films which he saw, only one was an "indisputed success": George Chuliukin's *The Unruly Ones*. This was about a well-meaning girl who ineptly tries to reform two Dead-End-Kid types working in a factory. She is successful only when they take pity on her. The best part of the film, according to the critic, was the successful comedy treatment of a contemporary factory locale—no small accomplishment, surely.

Four of the eight were "complete fiascos," and three were in-between, including a Soviet *Knock on Any Door* about a gang of juvenile delinquents. Haniutin concludes:

"This proportion cannot help but cause alarm. . . . We proudly count up the figures of the growth of film production: 60 films per year, 80, 100. At one time quantitative growth was very important—it was necessary to unleash all the productive forces of the motion picture industry. Now we put out many films. And the question of quality becomes decisive." (*IK* '59.9:75.)

To conclude, something must be said about foreign coverage in *IK*, which beats our coverage of cinema in "the socialist camp." To quote a letter which I received recently from Iskusstvo Press Editor A. Karaganov: "At the present time we are systematically following American literature on motion picture art, and that is why we, just like you, feel more and more the need for an English-Russian Film Dictionary" (a suggestion I had made).

Frequently *IK* publishes interviews or translations of articles by Western critics or film-makers, many of whom tend to the left (e.g., the French Marxist Georges Sadoul), and some of whom discuss their trials and tribulations in making films under the "conditions of capitalist financing, distribution, and censorship" (e.g., De Santis). A big spread was given to Chaplin on his seventieth birthday, complete with stills from all his important films. Occasionally scenarios by foreigners are published, such as an East German answer to Lammorisse's *Red Balloon* emphasizing happiness in collective play.

Western, especially American, technical progress is paid close attention. In many issues there is an article by a Soviet critic or a translated letter from a film critic abroad reviewing current production in that country, such as Sadoul on the "New Wave" (*IK* '59.9:125–33; published by *Sight & Sound*, Summer '59). *IK* also likes to print interviews or letters from foreign film-makers who discuss the influence played in their country by the big Soviet silent films and theoretical books of the 'twenties and 'thirties.

In the brief notes department "From Everywhere," Red China seems to be given the biggest coverage, followed by the United States, France, and Italy about equally. This Western coverage is accurate but the selection of many items is calculated not to underemphasize our economic woes—declining attendance, theater bankruptcies, etc., and in a long item on the Academy Awards it was mentioned that "Sidney Poitier, a Negro, was not given an Oscar for his brilliant performance in *The Defiant Ones*." Sweden receives little attention, and in the last several issues of *IK* Ingmar Bergman is discussed (briefly) only once, in connection with his *Wild Strawberries* in which "is depicted the life of simple people."

Issues 8 and 10 of last year gave extensive play to the Moscow Festival and the films shown there (13 of 24 awards went to the Communist bloc). Included were sum-ups by Gerasimov and Joris Ivens and four interviews with foreign directors by their Soviet counterparts. Yutkevich had a long talk with the UN's Thorold Dickinson on many subjects, including his *Queen of Spades* ('49) which Russians laughed at because it was so British and un-Russian; Dickinson thought the Soviet cinema should get away from so many war pictures (e.g., *A Man's Fate*), but Yutkevich countered with the desire to expose "those responsible for war and for armed intervention in others' internal affairs," citing *Attack* and *Paths of Glory* as good examples. Western use of professional actors in documentaries, a technique which Soviet film-makers deny on principle, was also a topic of debate between them and in another talk between documentary-makers Paul Paviot of France and Eli

Kopalin (a former assistant of Dziga Vertov's).

Soviet critics often mention two examples of Western influence on their films: neorealism with its self-centered "little man" and its pessimism, and interior monologue. They acknowledge the merits of neorealism—from the Soviet point of view, its negation of "capitalist, middle-class society"—but are none too happy when this negative pessimism turns up in Soviet movies supposedly giving a true picture of contemporary Soviet society in terms of squalor and lust.

Some aspects of Western cinema which are unreservedly panned by Soviet criticism are the new bloodthirsty horror cycle (e.g., a sarcastic article, *IK*, '59.7:152-3), and the portrayal of contemporary life either through crime, violence, and sex, or through sweetened sentimentality, in either case accompanied by refusal to face up to the "contradictions of capitalist society." An article summarizing the festival in Moscow, written by Gerasimov, is typical. He takes a favorable attitude to Fellini, whom "no one will accuse . . . of indifference—the greatest *crime for an artist*" (italics his), and to Kurt Hoffmann's *Aren't We Wonderful?*<sup>2</sup> from West Germany (a Festival prize winner). He mourns over Rossellini's Indian fiasco, and lashes out again at his favorite whipping boy, Orson Welles, whom Gerasimov likes to cite as an illustration of all that's wrong with Western films: ". . . made in the spirit of 'Grand Guignol,' with surrealist effects calculated for sensational shock and crushing the human spirit." (*IK* '59.10:11-15.)

Although Soviet criticism does show considerable interest in Western cinema, this concern is restricted mainly to the critical level, as opposed to the theoretical where thinking still tends to be rather parochial. A recent debate, lasting several issues, on the nature of the screenplay—whether it possesses specific cinematic qualities, its relation to literature, etc.—was waged mostly within the framework of Soviet film history and theory, which is why one article on the subject, by M. Bleiman ('59.7:67-75) is so striking. Bleiman stresses the necessity for analyzing the nature of the screenplay in its historical context, since its purpose has changed in the different periods of film

history, and in support of his contention he demonstrates good acquaintance with Western theory and history. He cites as examples the early theories of Bela Balasz and René Clair's *Entr'acte*; discusses the American silent comedy of Lloyd and Sennett and its replacement after sound by the "theatrical wit" of writers like Riskin for such directors as Capra, Lubitsch, and Koster; mentions the Hitchcock-style mystery as one genre which survived sound almost intact; shows that with sound the motion picture has tended to become more and more literary, less and less cinematic, with Lumet's *Twelve Angry Men* as perhaps the extreme case, although Tati's *Mon Oncle* is a complete exception. Of course Bleiman also refers to the theory and practice of the Soviet masters—Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Gabrilovich, etc.—but these are balanced by knowledgeable incorporation of Western cinema history into the development of Bleiman's own theory.

#### NOTES

1. An instance of the cheapness of Russian books compared with ours: the Russian translation of Lindgren can be bought in the U.S. for \$1.50, while the original English edition sells here for \$4.50.

2. Available, like a number of the items mentioned, through Four Continent Book Corporation, 822 Broadway, New York 3, N.Y.—\$2 for a one-year subscription.

3. Four dollars per year in the United States.

4. Thirteen dollars per year in the United States.

5. There is a certain difficulty in handling English names; they come out, in Cyrillic spelling: Lewis "Jilbert," Delmer "Davis," "Well-es" in two syllables, Yul "Brünner," "Vinchenty" Minnelli, "Jane" Simmons, Stanley "Kabrick." But then, who can complain? Look at the atrocities we commit on Russian names trying to spell them in English.

6. All three of these—and many other current Soviet pictures are film versions of outstanding literary works. Others which have come to the screen recently include Gogol's *Overcoat* and Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, neither of which met with much enthusiasm among the critics. A campaign is now under way to film the works of Vladimir Mayakovsky, the Futurist poet and playwright (and movie actor) the eccentricity of whose behavior was surpassed only by that of his verse, and who has long been a touchy subject for Soviet library scholars.

## Film Reviews

### *Sons and Lovers*

Producer: Jerry Wald. Director: Jack Cardiff. Script: Gavin Lambert and T. E. B. Clarke, from the D. H. Lawrence novel. Camera: Freddie Francis. Music: Mario Nascimbene. With Trevor Howard, Wendy Hiller, Dean Stockwell, Mary Ure.

A passion for life. . . . Among the many qualities to be found in D. H. Lawrence's work, this passion and feeling for the joys and sorrows of everyday existence cast a spell on the reader each time he returns to this author's best work. It so happened that I was re-reading *Sons and Lovers* at about the same time the film appeared, so I find it difficult to separate the original from its screen translation. In some ways, it is a dangerous book to adapt, for it is relatively simple to maintain a coherent story-line and yet miss the essence. And this is what has happened in Jerry Wald's production for Fox. Curiously enough, the film is not really long enough: a span of three hours might have encompassed the story's incidental riches (such as the description of the early life of the Morel family), but a mere hundred minutes reduce the story to the unhappy love life of a talented boy from the pits. Were the box-office risks too great? In any case, Lawrence's subtle character-drawing requires a large and leisurely canvas; compressed into a kind of *Reader's Digest* version, it is not surprising that it fails to achieve a firm personality of its own.

Some of these weaknesses stem from a script which suggests the participation of a number of hands besides the officially credited Gavin Lambert and T. E. B. Clarke. The comic interpolations, such as the wholly ludicrous presentation of the suffragette meeting, have a sub-Ealing flavor and in this context are painfully out of place. And yet, despite all these drawbacks, it would be ungenerous to deny the film's incidental pleasures. Something comes through, as they say: an occasional flash of Lawrence's proud dialogue, a moment of truth here and

there, such as the first glimpse of the factory where Paul Morel begins his journey into the world.

This is a difficult book to cast: Lawrence's earthy characters with their deep family instincts and their painful attempts at personal communication need a special kind of response from the players and the cast chosen for this adaptation only intermittently measures up to these demands. Trevor Howard and Wendy Hiller tend to fall back on the familiar serio/comic traditions of the theater; both have a sure feeling for the point of a scene, but their personal mannerisms are also clearly evident and, in the final analysis, they seem a little too cozy and consciously proletarian. Despite his dry and rather monotonous delivery, Dean Stockwell makes a very honest attempt to create Paul Morel—his pale, earnest face has the right kind of frustrated eagerness, yet he fails to sustain the burning intensity so necessary for an adequate realization of the part. He is at his best in the scenes with the film's Clara, played by Mary Ure. This is probably her best screen performance to date and the nearest the film gets to an authentic Lawrentian characterization. Mysteriously sensual, sweet yet bitter, she plays with considerable emotional and technical control, notably in the parlor scene with Paul when their love begins to crystallize. (It is regrettable that a subsequent love scene has been removed from the British release version so that the film might get an "A" certificate).

*Wendy Hiller, Dean Stockwell, and Trevor Howard in SONS AND LOVERS.*



I have delayed mentioning the director's contribution until now for the simple reason that his presence is only intermittently felt. Although Jack Cardiff's camera eye serves him well in several stunning landscapes at the beginning, the sense of place becomes less acute as the film progresses, and the interiors do not have that "lived-in" quality which a designer like Trauner can create. More seriously, Cardiff fails to catch the throb of pain and passion which permeates so much of Lawrence's prose. Some of the handling is quite workmanlike, but one never feels that he cared desperately for the story and Lawrence, of all writers, needs the total involvement of his adaptors. Cardiff also follows a contemporary fashion by using huge close-ups at moments of emotional crisis, without realizing that it is the feeling *behind* the face that really counts.

*Sons and Lovers*, then, proves once again how difficult it is to translate a lengthy, highly personal literary classic into a product of mass entertainment. The fact that it does not entirely betray the original is a point in its favor—the end, in fact, is unusually ambiguous, without quite conveying Lawrence's meaning. Yet one cannot help feeling that given a little more time, a little more ambition, and a more consciously aware director, something finer than an "interesting adaptation" might have been achieved.

—JOHN GILLET

### *The Cousins*

(*Les Cousins*) Written, produced, and directed by Claude Chabrol. Camera: Henri Decae. Dialogue: Paul Gégauff. Music: Paul Misraki. With: Gérard Blain, Jean-Claude Brialy, and Juliette Mayniel.

*What is good cheer  
Which death threats can disrupt?*  
—*La Fontaine: THE TOWN RAT AND THE  
COUNTRY RAT (Trans., Marianne Moore).*

Contempt for their country cousins is a hallmark of urban sophisticates. Since Horace, at least, an occasional conservative social critic has undertaken to reverse the judgment: the town mouse may live more luxuriously and excitingly,

but the country mouse is snug. Chabrol gives us a version of this fable which is as strictly contemporary in setting as it is traditional at heart. Charles comes up from the provinces to study law in Paris, and he shares an apartment with cousin Paul. He is both fascinated and repelled by the elaborately conventional bohemianism of his cousin's circle; he is drawn into it; it destroys him. (Horace's mouse, and La Fontaine's rat, escaped the perils of the city, and lived to point the moral.)

Chabrol presents a dispiriting picture of a group of Parisian law students who are deadly serious in their cocky rejection and reversal of the expectations that society has of them. Within the circle which provides them with social warmth they avidly and almost ritualistically seek a hedonistic satisfaction which constantly eludes them. To the bourgeois these young people (like our own beat generation) seem to be absolutely free and irresponsible, and this is an image that they cultivate. To Chabrol it is their lostness, their desperation, their huddling together like children, that are most evident. (Their childlikeness is accentuated by the presence at their party of a full-grown sot and lecher.) When frantic pleasure-seeking is obligatory, and permissible forms of pleasure are prescribed, the result is intolerance and a sub-threshold unhappiness. Charles, fresh from the provinces, has habitual and instinctive patterns that, in fact, promise to deliver him far more happiness than his city contemporaries are likely to find. He is attached to his family, he looks for a monogamous marriage founded on love, and he expects to work hard at his profession. However, he makes the mistake of falling in love with a girl whose appreciation of his virtues is aesthetic rather than emotional, descends into morbidity, and dies by an accident for which he is partly responsible.

Chabrol is strong in feeling for the rules of the game as played by these stranded young adults. Paul's friends pour their energies into devising ever new ways to demonstrate their freedom from the larger society which they have not yet entered. Paul himself is an artist in this respect. In Paris, of all places, what

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better way of showing contempt for tradition and social solidarity than the affectation of Germanisms? At a wild party in his apartment Paul plays the Siegfried music in hi-fi, dons a Nazi officer's cap, and stalks through the darkened rooms reciting German poetry. This is Chabrol at his best, and it is strange that he has been misunderstood precisely here. Bosley Crowther, writing his *New York Times*' review, could hardly be more wrong in his comment: "The concept of the youth of the nation corrupted by the Nazi image is profound." In its perverse antisocial meaning, Paul's action is about as Nazi as would have been a reading from Proust in Hitler's Germany. The *London Times* critic equally missed the boat by referring to the "pleasant but inappropriate choice of Wagnerian background music." The way in which the music was generated within the film reminded me of Renoir, particularly of his use of the *Danse Macabre* in *La Règle du Jeu*.

Chabrol's moralistic purposes have induced some improbabilities in the motivation. Thus, it was excellent when Florence, the girl with whom Charles fell in love, decided that it would be a change for her to be in love, and she might as well try it; and it was acute to have sophisticated Paul show uneasiness at the apparent success of provincial cousin Charles. It was acute, too, to show Paul and the degenerate Clovis argue Florence out of her experiment. (Crowther again missed the point in finding that Florence was "diverted from a pure romance.") But that Paul should be provoked to the extent of establishing a ménage with Florence is surely convenient for the fable rather than plausible. Then, too, Paul's bluffing his way through his examinations is perfectly acceptable: but that Charles, who works hard in spite of his setback in love, should utterly fail, seems too contrived a fall. The best one can make of it is that Charles' error was in becoming a law student in the first place, not that he was in any meaningful sense destroyed by Florence and Paul.

*The Cousins* is imaginatively conceived and well directed. If it lacks punch—the punch of, say, *La Règle du Jeu* or *I Vitelloni*—it is because in it Chabrol is too small a social critic. With

rare exceptional moments, in place of richness and intensity Chabrol offers precision and disdain.—R. H. TURNER

### *The Threepenny Opera*

A rerelease by Brandon Films of *Die Dreigroschenoper* (1931). Director: G. W. Pabst. Screenplay: Leo Lania, Ladislav Vajda, Bela Belasz, based on the play by Bert Brecht. Music: Kurt Weill (rerecorded from various partial prints by James Townsend). Décor: Andrei Andreiev. Photography: Fritz Wagner. With Lotte Lenya, Rudolph Forster, Carola Neher, Ernst Busch, Fritz Rasp, Reinhold Schünzel.

Seeing *The Threepenny Opera* makes one realize just how bad the current hit, *Rosemary*, is—how corny its cynicism, how obtuse and passionless its technique. A little *Expressionismus* and a lot of kitsch-y sex are served up as hard facts and plain talk, and the clever little Brechtian lyric interludes lock it all into place: surely, this must be Art. One doesn't necessarily go to *The Threepenny Opera* for honesty, but for a particular artist's truth that precludes fairness. Brecht isn't fair to capitalism, but he is fairer than the makers of *Rosemary*, who congratulate themselves over and over for showing how the circuits of commerce tangle with the lineaments of gratified desire. Capitalists may also be satyrs, but for Brecht it is bad enough that they are capitalists. This point of view was added at Brecht's own insistence when the film was being prepared. In 1928 he had wrung acid from the general theme of poverty and exploitation; by 1930 he had discovered a name for it and a worldview that polarized his thought forever. Brecht's anticapitalism is explicit in the film of *The Threepenny Opera*, it pushes his inverted moral logic to the final monster irony. Those who know only the stage version will not see the royal messenger come riding with a last-minute reprieve for the condemned Macheath. Building on a speech of Macheath's in his original libretto ("What is a picklock to a bankshare?"), Brecht has contrived to free Macheath so that he may become the president of a bank

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acquired, with fine entrepreneurial flourish, by his wife, Polly. The last shot of the film has Mr. Peachum, Tiger Brown, and Macheath drawing up their partnerships in the bank; this is the Big Time.

The film version reflects Brecht's unmistakable ideational intensity, though not at all his exactitude of expression. It would appear that the whole denouement of the film was shaped by the scriptwriters, Leo Lania, Ladislav Vajda, and Bela Balasz, from an outline Brecht had handed them shortly before he brought suit against the producers because they were going to be unfaithful to him. Surely Brecht himself would have provided a tighter dialectic and a more appropriate finale than the Army Song, which is rendered at this point. At any rate, Pabst was never strong on ideas, and the loose atmospherics, the floating vague interior shots, and the dim objectivity of the exterior ones, suggest that he saw no real distinction between the crooks, molls, and beggars of Brecht and those of John Gay.

Always a good tactician, Pabst finds a kind of foreshortened reality in which to present the action, expanding on the purlieus of "Soho" and deflecting whenever he can the frontal attack of theater, which, naturally, Brecht's play gloried in. He is much helped by the brilliant and eccentric settings which Andrei Andreiev has designed like a series of traps, and by the harsh romanticism of Fritz Arno Wagner's photography—a necessary paradox, perhaps, for a production that is neither a "street film" nor a fantasy. Pabst's direction, though soft and full of opulent touches, is never less than intelligent, but it cannot be said to solve any of the problems of transcribing ballad operetta to the screen—much less a ballad operetta by Brecht. He is at his characteristic best in the extended non-lyrical sections, and especially in the scene where the beggars confront the Queen. But he scamps dreadfully on the songs. Weill's whole output has been drastically reduced, and the numbers that remain are either isolated like little set-pieces, or relegated to the sound track, where they are mostly used to fill in intermission black-outs. It is true that at this time of early sound

films mixing was unknown in Germany, and sound recording was carried out at the same time as filming, frequently with orchestras in attendance. Getting dialogue and vocalizing above music must have added intolerably to the new burdens of sound, and the Germans did not relinquish camera mobility for its sake, as did the Americans. Even so, one is not consoled for the loss of half of Weill's score, including Peachum's Morning Hymn (as Peachum is played by Fritz Rasp, this is a double loss), his duet with Mrs. Peachum (the "Whereas-they" or "Instead-of" Song), Mrs. Peachum's Ballad of Sexual Dependency, the first-act trio finale for the three Peachums, the tango for Jenny and Macheath (though a few bars of it are heard in the brothel scene), and Macheath's jail soliloquy in the third act and also his very eloquent Villonesque appeal on the gallows. The version now being issued by Brandon is without doubt as complete as can be and restores the song of Jenny the Pirate—most gratifyingly, since formerly Lotte Lenya was left with nothing at all to sing. There is still not enough of her, and, disappointingly, her big number is neither led up to nor away from by Pabst—just given quickly for the record and for the people who have been waiting to hear it. But she is worth waiting for, this young Lenya; touchingly shrill in her terrifying aria, her moody and withdrawn features beautifully lit by Wagner, she stops the film as one imagines she stopped the show nightly at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. The Barbara Song is sung by Polly at her wedding, in a pretty and strong interpretation by Carola Neher, and several of the other tunes (including, of course, the Moritat, which is not reprised at the end) are done by the street singer (Ernst Busch) who narrates the film. In the non-singing parts appear Reinhold Schünzel, excellent and really funny as Tiger Brown, Valeska Gert as the haridan, Mrs. Peachum, and Rudolph Forster as Macheath. Herr Forster has a rather metallic tenor, which he raises once or twice in a romantic duet with Polly and in the Army Song with a group, but he appears for the most part as a kind of Teutonic lay-figure, the very image of a dapper businessman ripping on into middle



age. (Albert Préjean must have made quite a different Macheath in the French version.)

Obviously, any *Threepenny Opera* without music is an impostor. This is a very likeable impostor in its cheery-beery way, and represents something of a triumph for Pabst, although one that is, be it said, beside the point. One would not have minded so much Pabst's dismissal of the play's musical portions were there not the suspicion that in cutting or slighting them Pabst felt he was bringing the whole thing closer to reality and therefore closer to filmic values. A truly Brechtian film need not be a contradiction in terms. That it was thought to be such by film-makers possibly explains the bad luck Brecht always had with the cinema, despite his great affection for it. His life-long war against an illusory realism in theater, if carried to the film—straight into enemy territory, as it were—might have resulted in some excitingly literal, film-as-film experiments—or it might only have served to expose the mechanism of cinema in ways destructive to audience understanding. The main thing to remember, however, is that if the world of Brecht is to appear on the screen, cinematic equivalents of Brecht's own "endistancement" techniques must be created. The moderate good sense of the semi-theatricalized adaptation, which is what Pabst and his colleagues have given us, is ultimately as fatal to Brecht as it is foreign to Pabst. Even though he goes so far as to photograph a "cinematic stage," Pabst's whole tendency is to move in the opposite direction, far to the right of Brecht. He seems always to be trying to tug the film back to the social reality the play sprang from, and sometimes, with Andreiev modifying and bewitching that reality, he succeeds astonishingly. He fails in his attempts to establish in Brecht's characters an emotional presence they do not possess; for example, in the long opening episode of Polly's seduction by Macheath his camera circles the two actors helplessly, looking for the psychology that isn't there. It is as if Balzac were to rewrite *Candide*. But the remarkable thing is that, although Pabst's movie sense is never wholly liberated, it is never wholly confined, and the compromise gives the film its

odd style. For the film has a style that fascinates, as well as at least one entry for anybody's treasury of immortal performances.

—ARLENE CROCE

### *Private Property*

Writer and Director: Leslie Stevens. Producer: Stanley Colbert. Photography: Ted McCord. With Corey Allen, Warren Oates, Kate Manx.

*"While Hollywood has been well aware of France's 'New Wave' in motion pictures, the film capital, until now, has made no effort to match it. While most of the ingredients—vigorous story-telling, great photography, an accent on youth, both in front of and behind the camera—have been available, the ability to deliver them in a first-class screen package at the nominal cost of a 'New Wave' film has defied the talents of Hollywood's picture makers.*

*"The producers of PRIVATE PROPERTY found the answer. Total cost of the production was \$59,525.00.*

*"For the other necessary ingredients they hired Cinematographer Ted McCord, two-time winner of Academy Awards for photography (TREASURE OF SIERRA MADRE and EAST OF EDEN); had a vigorous contemporary story and script by dramatist Leslie Stevens, who wrote the Broadway comedy hit, MARRIAGE-GO-ROUND; put the youthful Corey Allen, Warren Oates, and Kate Manx before the cameras as their stars; and for director and producer respectively, had an equally youthful pair (in their early thirties) in Stevens and his partner Stanley Colbert, one-time literary agent and executive of a New York publishing company.*

*"Operating under their own banner of Kana Productions, Stevens and Colbert spent many months in metriculous [sic] pre-production planning, laying out on paper every scene and camera setup. For their settings they used Stevens' home in the Hollywood hills, its swimming pool and gardens, and a vacant house next door. For 'locations' they used the nearby highway at*

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*Malibu Beach, and a handy strip of Sunset Boulevard. When they were ready to shoot, their schedule called for ten days of production. They finished in ten days.*

*"PRIVATE PROPERTY was denied a seal by Hollywood's Production Code Administration, but it was passed without change of any sort by the New York State Board of Censors."*

—From the public relations handbill given out at the preview screening of *Private Property*.

As soon as I finished reading this public relations blurb, I became aware of light applause and looked up to see a roundish-looking man with a pink face being introduced as the man responsible for the picture we were about to see: "Mr. Leslie Stevens!" From Mr. Stevens, I learned the following:

This was his "first picture."

It was "conceived as an experiment."

That he had "learned what a powerful medium the movies are."

That this film was "intended to evoke."

That "intended subliminal effects came across like a sledgehammer."

That the message of the film was "seduction without love leads to disaster."

That the idea for the film had come "from studies of Freud and Don Juan types."

That "there are five more films coming."

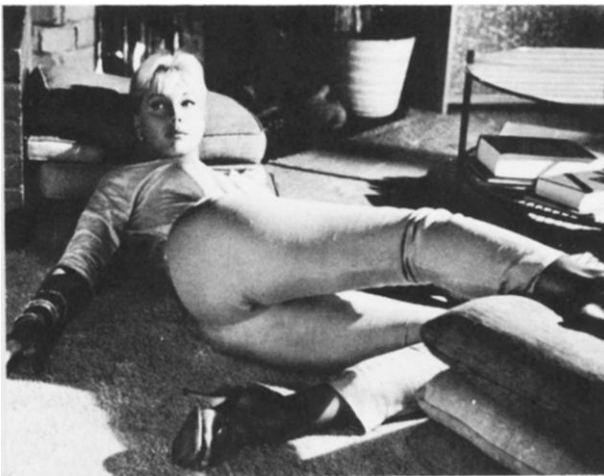
*Private Property* begins at Malibu in a gas station where we discover two youths dressed

in sweatshirts and motorcycle boots. Duke, the hero, is a ladies' man who has promised to "fix up" his pal, Boots, with a girl. (Boots is a repugnant lout who, understandably, has bad luck with women.) They see a fancy-looking blonde drive up. They discuss her possibilities. The lout approves of the choice. They pull out their switchblades and force a traveling salesman to "follow the pink twitch in the white Corvette!" (At this point the titles come on with Stevens' credit reading "Dramatist-Director.")

The duo move into an empty house next to hers and amuse themselves by peeping at her. (Many playful minutes of screen time are consumed by this voyeuristic excursion.) Duke begins the curious seduction, calling on her disguised as a gardener. We learn that she is married to an insurance salesman who doesn't realize that he has a "sex-pot" on his hands. In one memorable scene, the "twitch," dressed in tight satin pants, spreads her legs in front of the camera and says, "Roger, I'm ready for bed." But Roger is on the phone talking business. Next, Roger flies off to San Francisco to sell insurance, unaware that two lunatics are lusting after his wife.

A little later we find Duke, Boots, and the "twitch" having a tea party beside the swimming pool. Soon Duke and the "twitch" are alone, dancing, kissing, and drinking beer. He maneuvers her into the bedroom, where she explains that it would be wrong to consummate the seduction on the bed she shares with her insurance salesman. Duke carries her next door and plunks her down. He yells "Go!" to his friend Boots who jumps on her and begins to slobber. But Boots is impotent and wants only to look at the "twitch." Meanwhile, outside, Duke is tearing his hair. He is unaware that his pal is sexually incapable and interprets her screams of terror as cries of pleasure (not an easy thing to do). His agony quickly turns to rage when he sees her stumbling back home after the ordeal. He confronts her, mumbling, "You lay there like a dog . . . you were drunk and crying for it." He kicks her in the stomach while his friend, Boots, crawls out of the shadows and jumps him with a knife. The tables

*PRIVATE PROPERTY. The "twitch" asks her husband, "Are you ready for bed now?"*



turn and Boots gets his in the swimming pool. Duke chases after the "twitch" who is trying to call the police. He rips out phone wires. She hides in the swimming pool. The husband appears in a taxi. The "twitch" gets a revolver and blasts the villain right through his sweat-shirt. The "twitch" and her insurance salesman embrace amidst the corpses. He turns to her and asks, "Are you all right?" She answers, "I wasn't, but I am now."

The film ends and the audience applauds loudly.

What can we conclude from all this nonsense?

Technically, the film meets all of the "standards of the industry," and in slickness and polish it compares favorably with the "Old Wave." But this is of little interest since Hollywood films rarely lack technical competence. But unfortunately there seems to be a direct proportion between slickness and the lack of ability to portray believable conflicts and emotions. It is always difficult and challenging to concern oneself with reality. The easiest way to meet the challenge is to avoid it. Hollywood has always been addicted to its own distorted reflections of reality and *Private Property* is just a new example of this mythomania.

*Private Property* is not the story of a seduction. It avoids the complex human emotions which are normally involved in any seduction. It derives its suspense from another source.

The "twitch" is only a mannikin, a pin-up girl, the detached and non-human sexual object of a masturbation fantasy. Women will react unfavorably to this film and to the "twitch" who isn't a woman but only the shape of one as conceived in an onanistic fantasy. This fantasy is universal. Nearly every pornographic story ever written features such a "woman."

Is this film, then, anything but shaded pornography? Stevens has been quoted by one reviewer as describing *Private Property* as "a Rorschach test." But it is more probable that *Private Property* was a conscious attempt to exploit a market. And the size of the American pornography market is a good indication of the possibilities for profit in this area. (On news-

stands the "snatch" magazines compete only with "movie-star" and "popular romances" for top sales.)

Obviously, Mr. Stevens' subliminal effects came across like sledgehammers intentionally. His "studies of Freud and Don Juan types" were part of his motivational market research. His "experiment" was a money-making one.

It's business as usual in the film capital, but now parading the banner of "low budget," "young talent" and "new wave."

—BENJAMIN T. JACKSON

## Psycho

Director: Alfred Hitchcock. Script: Joseph Stefano from a novel by Robert Bloch. Camera: John L. Russell. Music: Bernard Hermann. With Anthony Perkins, Janet Leigh, Vera Miles, John Gavin.

Hitchcock is said to be very pleased with this film, and well he might be. In it he has abandoned the commercial geniality of his recent work and turned to out-and-out horror and psychopathology: there are two gruesome knife-murders portrayed in more or less full view, and an attempted third one. The film begins with a drab, matter-of-fact scene in a hotel bedroom (the girl's unwholesomeness—she later steals \$40,000—is no doubt established equally by the fact of her being found in bed with a man, though wearing bra and half-slip, and by the fact that it is midday). It imperceptibly shifts to a level of macabre pathology, unbearable suspense, and particularly gory death. In it, indeed, Hitchcock's necrophiliac voyeurism comes to some kind of horrifying climax. Phallic-shaped knives swish past navels, blood drips into bathtubs, eyes stare in death along the floor, huge gashes appear in a man's amazed face, and so forth. So well is the picture made, moreover, that it can lead audiences to do something they hardly ever do any more—cry out to the characters, in hopes of dissuading them from going to the doom that has been cleverly established as awaiting them. (It turns out to be a slightly

turn and Boots gets his in the swimming pool. Duke chases after the "twitch" who is trying to call the police. He rips out phone wires. She hides in the swimming pool. The husband appears in a taxi. The "twitch" gets a revolver and blasts the villain right through his sweat-shirt. The "twitch" and her insurance salesman embrace amidst the corpses. He turns to her and asks, "Are you all right?" She answers, "I wasn't, but I am now."

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different doom than the audience believes; and in the third instance it is thwarted, slightly improbably: in this we see the usual Hitchcock, unbothered by problems of motivation and concerned only with the joy of giving one more turn to the screw. But on the whole one does not need, in *Psycho*, the suspension of common sense usually required to enjoy Hitchcock.)

The key to the excellent shift in levels (it is perhaps more a smooth descent, from apparent "normality" to utter ghastliness) is provided, unbelievable as it may seem, by Anthony Perkins, who in this film is revealed to be an actor after all. Instead of the rather wooden person we have seen in *Desire under the Elms* or *On the Beach*, Perkins here gives us first a charming, shy, lonely boy; then a lecherous, dangerous, frustrated youth; then a frightened, sinister, criminally insane man; and finally he is revealed (there is no real reason to conceal the final twist, which is equally horrifying if one knows about it in advance) as a psychological hermaphrodite who has killed and mummified his mother but preserved her in half of his own personality, so to speak, and who "in her person" commits the murders motivated by the sexuality or fears of the other half of his personality.

All this is explained, in the obligatory rationality-scene at the end, by a young psychologist in the police office. This scene supposedly restores the audience to some real frame of reference. Meanwhile Perkins, sitting in a nearby cell, hears his "mother's" voice in internal mono-

logue, meditating on "her son's" fate. The camera closes in, but not too close, on his face, now utterly strange, intense, mad. (It is probably the most apt use ever made of internal monologue.)

All this is very nice, if not quite the kind of thing one would recommend to sensitive souls. It is superbly constructed, both shot-by-shot and in the over-all organization by which the shocks are distributed and built up to. (The music by Bernard Herrmann, an old radio man, is conventional suspense stuff but immensely effective.) Aside from Perkins, the acting is ordinary but satisfactory. Hitchcock is said to have once remarked that "Actors are cattle," and this is all that is really required in many of his pictures. The suspense mechanism is all; style is all; deception is all. To allow the personae involved to become human beings would destroy everything, in the usual Hitchcock film. *Psycho* is better: the people are acceptable, at any rate; there is no need to make excuses for them. Still, it is the film *itself* that grips one—in these times, a remarkable achievement, and a hint that "realism" in the cinema is perhaps not so important as people think. *Psycho* is full of jokes, twists, pieces of nastiness that one would think gratuitous in any other film-maker. Hitchcock forces one to realize that these things are *the point*. How lovely, he would doubtless say, about the way Janet Leigh, a faintly playful, quite sexy broad, is done in! She gambols in the shower, like somebody in an advertisement, while in the background a figure blurred by the shower curtain enters the room, approaches, grips the edge of the curtain. . . . Then, in a flurry of quick cutting which managed to get past the censors yet remains the goriest thing seen on film in a long time, she is stabbed to death, and slumps hideously to the floor in a series of movements over which the camera lingers lovingly.

*Psycho* is surely the sickest film ever made. It is also one of the most technically exciting films of recent years, and perhaps an omen: only, it appears, in films whose subject-matter is trivial and sometimes phony can Hollywood film-makers find the inspiration or the freedom to make really ingenious films. The trickery of *Psycho*



**PSYCHO:** *Beginning of the descent.*  
Anthony Perkins and Janet Leigh.

is more imaginative and far more elegantly contrived than the all-out seriousness of *Nun's Story*, not to mention the gigantism of *Ben-Hur*.

There is, to be sure, a "serious" subject to all seemingly trivial films, and in the case of Hitchcock the elucidation of the hidden motives upon which he has built his seemingly unimportant stories remains an intriguing job for some intrepid critic. In the meantime, anybody who likes gore, or who likes Hitchcock, will be made happy by *Psycho*. The tone of Hitchcock's recorded plug for the picture—delightfully charlatanish, reassuringly and almost smugly personal—is a perfectly sound introduction to the film.—ERNEST CALLENBACH

### *And Quiet Flows the Don*

Produced at the Gorky Film Studio. Director: Sergei Gerasimov. Script by Gerasimov, based on the novel by Mikhail Sholokov. Photography: Vladimir Rapoport. Music: Yuri Levitin. With Ellina Bys-tritskaya, Pyotr Glebov, Zinaida Kirienko, Danilo Ilchenko. Sovcolor. U.S. distributor: United Artists.

In converting a novel into a film, a major problem is that of fidelity to the novel: how closely should the film-maker adhere to the plot, structure, characterization presented by the author? What advantages does the film medium offer which the director should take; and how is he to compensate for the advantages of the literary medium which he cannot translate into film? No matter how he handles these problems, one group or another of film-goers will always be dissatisfied.\*

It is not, however, of lack of fidelity to his original that Sergei Gerasimov, director of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, can be accused. The novel, a contemporary Russian "classic" by Mikhail Sholokhov, deals with the life of the Don Cossacks from the years just before the First World War until after the Revolution. Sholokhov wrote and published the novel in four volumes between 1928 and 1940, and the wide spread in the writing can be seen reflected in the somewhat strung-out and inconclusive nature of the book. Its theme, the theme of all Sholokhov's writings, is the solidarity and the inherently nationalistic character of the Cossacks. The theme itself has a great documentary interest, and the book shows the Cossacks as a fierce, often barbarous, but essentially agrarian people, determined to preserve their distinctness from other Russian peoples, yet increasingly involved with them in the struggles that shook Russia for decades.

The novel is divided into four parts: "Peace," "War," "Revolution," and "Civil War." It is only the first two of these sections that the film takes up.† While following very closely the plot-line of the novel, these first two sections themselves, translated into film, do not make a convincing, self-sufficient story. They deal with the family Melekhov and primarily with the love-affair of Gregor Melekhov and Aksinia Astakhova, his neighbor's wife. Wishing to stop the affair, Gregor's father marries him off to Natalia Korshunova, the young daughter of a rich merchant. But Gregor cannot give Aksinia up and, abandoning the loving Natalia, he runs off with Aksinia to the estate of General Listnitsky, where they both find employment. When Gregor is conscripted, Aksinia finds herself un-

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† What is being distributed in this country is the first of three parts, each of which was originally more than two hours long. It appears that part one has been shortened; and it appears that the remaining two parts are not to be seen here (United Artists has not answered our inquiry about the situation). The truncated ending of the film we are seeing is only the last of many complications: the first two books of the novel are jointly known as *And Quiet Flows the Don*, the last two *The Don Flows Down to the Sea*. The entire novel bears the additional title, *The Quiet Don*. The filming of novels in parts seems to be a tendency in Soviet film-making; another recent case is *The Idiot*.

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able to bear her loneliness and begins an affair with Listnitsky's son. Gregor, returning, discovers this, and, after savagely beating both Aksinia and her lover, returns to his wife, who has crippled herself in a suicide attempt. The picture, but not the book, ends with Gregor and his wife in each other's arms while the rest of the Melekhov family stand around beaming.

This love story is only a frame on which Sholokhov hangs his much more important material: an account of what happened to the Cossack people during the war and the Revolution, and what happened to Gregor himself as he came in contact with revolutionary ideas (after the reunion with his wife) and found himself vacillating between the old and the new. Even in the novel, the character of Gregor is not convincingly presented. Perhaps he is typical of the Cossack—fiery and violent—but his actions, especially as shown in the film, often seem simply immature. And even in the novel, he is rarely portrayed as a person of deep thought or feeling.

To return, however, to the initial point: the film is exceedingly faithful to the literal intent of the novel, to the intent at least of the love-story. Too faithful. The major failing in script and direction is a failure to capitalize on the possibilities of the film medium. As one watches the film, one witnesses episode after episode taken from the novel, dramatized, and followed by more episodes. The effect is static, like that of a series of slides. The direction and photography lack variety, as does the color, which is drab throughout.



One of the advantages which the art of the novel has over that of the film is its greater leisure, which permits it to dwell on details, creating an atmosphere and a feeling for *place*, a feeling present only in the rarest of films. So, for example, on almost every page of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, one finds lovingly intimate descriptions of the country and of the river Don itself, such as these:

Here and there stars were still piercing through the ashen, early-morning sky. A wind was blowing from under a bank of clouds. Over the Don a mist was rolling high, piling against the slope of a chalky hill, and crawling into the cliff like a grey, headless serpent. The left bank of the river, the sands, the backwaters, stony shoals, the dewy weed, quivered with the ecstatic, chilly dawn. Beyond the horizon the sun yawned, and rose not.

The night before Easter Sunday the sky was overcast with masses of black cloud, and rain began to fall. A raw darkness enveloped Tatarsk. At dusk the ice of the Don began to crack with a protracted, rolling groan, and crushed by a mass of broken ice the first floe emerged from the water. The ice broke suddenly over a length of three miles, and drifted downstream. The floes crashed against one another and against the banks, to the sound of the church bell ringing measuredly for the service. At the first bend, where the Don sweeps to the left, the ice was dammed up. The roar and scraping of the moving floes reached the village. . . .

From the Don came a flowing whisper, rustle and crunch, as though a strongly-built, gaily-dressed woman as tall as a poplar were passing by, her great, invisible skirts rustling.

In his photography, Vladimir Rapoport at times, but too rarely, captures these moods. The Don seen cold and gray during the early fishing scene is one such time. The scene of the night which Gregor and Natalia spend outdoors in the wagon, with its blending darkness, snow, and human faces, is another. And some of the winter scenes around the Listnitsky estate capture the vastness and barrenness of the countryside and hint at its necessary effect on the people who live in it. But the poetic sense of place is all too often replaced by detailed and interesting interiors, exteriors, and matter-of-fact scenes.

*Pyotr Glebov and Ellina Bystritskaya*  
in *AND QUIET FLOWS THE DON*.

The picture does excel, and both photographer and director may claim credit for this, in the depiction of groups and mass scenes. The wedding feast, with its increasing hilarious drunkenness, is a masterpiece. The conscription scenes also, and that of the fight between Cossacks and Ukrainians, give a splendid feeling of group movement and warmth, aside from the depiction of individual faces and types, which is noteworthy also.

The minor characters and some of the major ones are excellently played, and attention to casting is particularly impressive. Pytor Glebov, who plays Gregor, is somewhat impassive, despite his arrestingly Asiatic face. Ellina Bystritskaya as his lover is handsome in the heavy Russian way. Her acting, too, seems rather stolid and lacking in variety of expression.

Thus the film may be taken as a fairly pleasing example of Socialist Realism, though it is hard to account for the almost total failure to handle the political and social issues involved in even the first two parts of the novel (Stockman, the communist agitator, for example, is only very briefly presented, and his role in the film would be totally unclear to anyone who had not read the novel). As realism, and as a piece of documentary art, *And Quiet Flows the Don* is highly interesting. Despite its flaws, despite its lack of daring or innovation, it is never boring. The sense of race and community are convincingly presented. The violence and bestiality of the Cossacks are transmitted with intelligence and tact and without too much of the novel's detail being visually transcribed. One can only regret that Gerasimov did not permit himself more liberties of this sort, more deviations in some directions, and perhaps a little less tact in others.

—HARRIET R. POLT

### *Films of Peter Sellers*

MAN IN A COCKED HAT. Roy Boulting and Jeffrey Dell wrote and directed. Music: John Addison. Photography: Max Greene.

BATTLE OF THE SEXES. Production Scenario:

Monja Tanischewsky, from "The Catbird Seat," by James Thurber. Director: Charles Crichton. Photography: Freddie Frances. Editor: Seth Holt. Music: Stanley Black. Narrator: Sam Wannamaker. THE MOUSE THAT ROARED. Original Story: Leonard Wibberly (of San Rafael and Hermosa Beach). Producer: Walter Shensen. Released through Carl Foreman. Director: Jack Arnold. Music: Edwin Astley. Photography: John Wilcox. I'M ALL RIGHT, JACK. See review on a later page for credits.

Several years ago, Alec Guinness rose from island fastness to world renown in a series of deliciously fraudulent films: *The Man in the White Suit*, *Captain's Paradise*, *The Lavender Hill Mob*, and *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. Since then, Mr. Guinness has deliberately (temporarily, we can hope) forsaken the style which first won him acclaim.

Rising up in his place on the wave of a totally different kind of comedy is Mr. Peter Sellers. Mr. Sellers' background is radio and television, and he has thus emerged to screen prominence from vaudeville-like beginnings (which I have no intention of recounting here—check your nearest national magazine or tune in to the BBC "Goon Show" series). Sellers seems to be a part of—and a product of—his times in a way almost the antithesis of Mr. Guinness, who came to films from the Old Vic and other legitimate theater work.

Four films currently expose Peter Sellers to American view. In *Man in a Cocked Hat*, he has a strong minor role, in *Battle of the Sexes*, a strong major role. The contrast between them is like that between indolent summer and fragile fall. In *The Mouse That Roared*, with three roles, he is the film, and in *I'm All Right, Jack* he plays a bit at the beginning as an old crotchety peer, and throughout the film appears as a stocky, stiff, and somewhat ill-built labor organizer.

These films are all satirical comments on various phases of modern life. *Hat* chews on British foreign diplomacy (with a healthy bite at the United Nations *via* angelic choirs who burst into song whenever the Chairman rises to speak); *Battle* slices away at modern feminism

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These films are all satirical comments on various phases of modern life. *Hat* chews on British foreign diplomacy (with a healthy bite at the United Nations *via* angelic choirs who burst into song whenever the Chairman rises to speak); *Battle* slices away at modern feminism

and male inadequacy (the “lady” in the film persistently tugs at neckties and handkerchiefs of her male co-workers, chiming brightly: “Must look smart!”); *Mouse* nibbles on diplomacy, war, America, bombs; *Jack* preys on both capital and labor. A sketchy synopsis of plots and a few random incidents will amply illustrate the more-or-less didactic nature of these films.

*Man in a Cocked Hat* takes off from a disturbance on a small island over some secret natural resource which the Russians seem anxious to obtain. The British resident, unaware that the island is no longer a British colony, dispatches a worried missive to the foreign office and the fun begins. Terry-Thomas, as Cadogen de Vere Carlton-Browne, temporary ambassador whom Britain sends to assuage the new island king, is pure delight. His mouth droops stupidly, his eye glints fearfully, his teeth hang forlornly in the mask of this simpleton entrusted with such a bewildering task.

His friend, Colonel Bellingham (Thorley Walters) is a nincompoop, pure and simple. Together they attempt to sway the young king (suavely played by Ian Bannen in the new fashion of movie heroes—slick, handsome, and just a wee bit weak). Amphibulous, prime minister to the king, is a sleepy-eyed, double-dealing political pusher. Sellers is convincing in this role, although fittingly relegated to the background fabric.

Along the way to a happy conclusion (which conquers both Russian bluster and British blunder), writers Roy Boulting and Jeffrey Dell (who also directed) have planted short conversations whose meaninglessness is only surpassed by their banality, a diplomatic greeting ceremony amidst cannon shot which is near slapstick, and the literal application of a UN resolution to divide the country in half—a patent absurdity almost too close for comfort. At one point, Thomas informs a flunky that they are now in possession of a raw material capable of blowing up the entire world.

“Why, that’s marvelous! Congratulations!” exudes the clerk.

To which Thomas, with all humility, rejoins: “Well, one does what one can.”

*Battle of the Sexes*, narrated with gentle humor, mock radio-announcer style, by Sam Wanamaker, is an adaptation of James Thurber’s “The Catbird Seat.” American business consultant Angela Barrows (smartly enacted by Constance Cummings) buttonholes bumptious Robert Morley, Scottish tweed manufacturer and distributor, and attempts to reorganize the firm along “efficiency expert” lines.

Miss Barrows’ entrance into the House of MacPherson allows scenarist Monja Tanischewsky to gambol in the gyres and wabes of super-efficiency, Americanism, feminism, and pomposity of all sorts. In spite of the expert foolishness of Morley and the deft characterizations of Jameson Clark, Moultrie Kelsall, Alex Mackenzie, Roddy McMillan and Donald Pleasence, the high points of the film belong to Sellers.

Sellers’ “little man” bears some resemblance to Chaplin, although one cannot press the point: watching him sneak back into his own offices in order to gum up Miss Barrow’s abhorred squawk-boxes and jumble her filing system reminds one of the put-upon but cockily vengeful Tramp. Later, when he has watched *The Perfect Crime* at the neighborhood flick, and has determined to do away with his tormentor, Sellers and photographer Freddie Frances gleefully conspire to fracture—if not Miss Barrows herself—the helpless audience. Eyes watch fascinated as Sellers reaches for a butcher knife, raises his arm and then stares, horror-stricken. The camera shifts to reveal a fist clutching a not-too-menacing batter-beater. (It is interesting that this long and furiously funny scene depends not at all on topical satire.) The film ends on the hint of a reversal to Mr. Martin’s triumph: the lady weeps, Mr. Martin buys a nose-gay, taps her on the shoulder, she turns—fade-out.

*The Mouse That Roared* possesses one of the funniest premises ever to adorn a syllogism. The island of Fenwick’s economic staple is wine. When California begins to export an imitation of same, Fenwick faces disaster. Queen Gloriana (Sellers) and Prime Minister Count Mountjoy (Sellers) decide to declare war on the United States. We’ll obviously lose, they calculate,

and then generous America will, as is her custom, bend over backwards to aid her vanquished foe. Forthwith they dispatch their most incompetent boob, Tully Bascomb (Sellers) with an army of farmers to invade New York. They arrive and heartlessly launch an attack of arrows at the skyscrapers during a civil defense experiment which keeps the entire population underground. They steal the Q bomb (10 times more powerful than the H bomb) and spirit it back with a handful of captured GIs led by a magnificently misused general (Macdonald Parke), the bomb's inventor (David Kossoff), and his daughter (woodenly presented by Jean Seberg). The crooked Prime Minister plots to reverse the victory and is foiled. The film's climax is a harum-scarum bomb-tossing episode—for, inevitably, the American bomb is designed in the shape of a football.

This film possesses more subtle satire and at the same time more outright farce than the other three, but somehow the two styles do not quite jell. Also, some portions are hurt by forced exaggeration, a result, perhaps, of either the producer's or director's elaboration of Leonard Wibberly's original story. (Mr. Wibberly had considerable difficulty finding a producer. When Walter Shensen did happen along, financing remained a problem. Finally, Mr. Carl Foreman agreed to release the film. Mr. Foreman, no longer part of the Hollywood scene, works out of England, but appears to be as concerned as ever with the correction of society's evils.)

Sellers' performances here constitute a triumph, at least in retrospect, for during the film, the curiosity of his triple role distracts from the excellence of his enactment.

*I'm All Right, Jack* (see full review elsewhere in this issue) is a positively devastating (and anteriorly depressing) blast at both capital and labor, with rapier as well as vaudeville-style broadsword strokes aimed at advertising, strikes, international bargaining, television, and the cocksure little man.

For his characterization of labor boss Fred Kite, Peter Sellers has chosen a confident, un-even voice, a sweetly-swaggering carriage, and push-pudgy gestures. As in previous roles, the

well-chosen bits of delineation masterfully illustrate the precise kind of man (or woman) Mr. Sellers wishes to convey.

Obviously, from the above synopses, all four films are barbed commentaries on our world—summit conferences, strikes, hot-and-cold wars, diplomacy (or the lack of it), and the emergence of the dominant female (with the simultaneous relegation of most males to second childhood).

These productions, in spite of their occasional thinness, thus belong to the heritage of Ben Jonson and Bernard Shaw—"They possess a basic outlook that is much more serious than many a lecture." And so, while it is true that "thoughtful laughter is still laughter,"\* the thoughts engendered here are, if analyzed, enough to make escape imperative—as, indeed, the hero of *Jack* escapes to a nudist colony. We live in a world, these films imply, in which dishonesty, incompetence, cowardice, and tomfoolery prevail at all levels of business and government.

It has been suggested that comedy has served different causes in the realm of social satire: conservative or revolutionary, hinging on the stand taken toward particular foibles of the society at hand. Ours is, perhaps, the Opportunity State, and its opportunist inhabitants must resolutely make the worst of it. These films possibly serve the double function of making the organized life *bearable* by poking fun at it (and thereby circumventing Beat or Angry reactions) while at the same time providing enough vision for objectivity, basic to any efforts for rebuilding the world around us without a prior destruction thereof.

Peter Sellers, by temperament, mind, and will is admirably suited to this sort of trenchant humor. He is a good comedian. He is not, however, consistently believable, and his performances in these films, while varied, intricate, lucid, and crisp, are somehow not corporeal enough. His characterizations appear to be interesting experimentations in styles, yet somewhat disembodied. Perhaps Mr. Sellers is delib-

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\* Both quotes are from "Styles of Drama," in John Gassner's *Producing the Play*.

erately restraining himself: his restraint sometimes smacks of French classicism as well as of the vaudeville disciplines of slapstick simplicity. Nevertheless, not enough of the human being emerges—too much frosting and not enough cake.

In the future, let us hope that this mischievous clown Sellers will fill up his funny masks with all of the inner—not just the outer—resources at his command.—KENNETH J. LETNER

### *I'm All Right, Jack*

Director: John Boulting. Screenplay: Frank Harvey and John Boulting. Camera: Max Greene. Music: Ken Hare.

Spike Milligan of the BBC's "Goon Show" recently called the class structure the curse of British film comedy, the dead hand that keeps inventiveness down and confines characters to the nice lord and lady, titled or not, and those lovable uncouth comics belowstairs. Certainly the "lower classes" are indispensable to the "Carry On" brand of coarseness, in or out of uniform, and they've made even the best Ealing comedies too quaint to be as pointed as they might be. But now come the Boulting brothers, not to overturn the system, but to turn it to comic advantage. The structure here serves not merely to provide an endless supply of unlet-

tered drolls, a strategy well worn after generations of music-hall comedy, but to keep the classes in their place long enough to make them standing targets. *I'm All Right, Jack* is not only funny but unique; it manages to be unfair to almost everyone.

Labor, management, and, more casually, the public, are equally fair game, but labor seems, in *Animal Farm* terms, a little "more equal than others." Management's representatives are blackguards, bounders, and cads—written, played, and even dressed in those terms, so that they're not quite of this time despite their production of arms "to preserve peace in the Middle East." The nonworking workers, on the other hand, are clearly The Working Class: congenitally lazy, greedy, and—behind their slogans of the class struggle—envious of the bosses. The union leader, in one of Peter Sellers' best performances, is never seen working. Instead, he leads marches, makes pronouncements, usually mispronounced, and leads the most conventional of home lives. His daughter bypasses the Lenin in his library for movie magazines, and "Mum" turns out to have a lot in common with the hero's dowager aunt. Everyone in this picture sails under false colors, and one of the funniest sequences contrasts a candy bar's cheery jingle with the sickening reality of its manufacture.

*I'm All Right, Jack* abounds with sly touches, some not quite relevant, such as the hero's father, a nudist who looks a great deal like Bertrand Russell. But much more is right on target, with little of the scattering of shots that marred *The Mouse That Roared*. The time-and-motion man makes himself inconspicuous to the men by reading *The Daily Worker*, a crew that can't be fired plays cards behind crates, an executive instructs trainees in marketing techniques that are too true to be comfortable. And most of the performances, while not unfamiliar, are gorgeous. Terry-Thomas is a perfect rotter as the personnel chief; one longs to see him in Waugh. Liz Fraser's mindless leading lady is an ideal foil to Ian Carmichael's decent, not-too-bright, incurable optimist. The role is his usual one, but he makes it singular enough to balance



THE MOUSE THAT ROARED. Peter Sellers as Tully Bascom (left), the Duchess (center), and the Prime Minister (right).

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THE MOUSE THAT ROARED. Peter Sellers as Tully Bascom (left), the Duchess (center), and the Prime Minister (right).

*Nadia Tiller and Peter Van Eyck in ROSEMARY.  
Dinah Washington in Bert Stern's*

the types arrayed against him in a strike engineered by the management, supported by the union, and sustained by the public. Everyone is taken in, including the judge who puts him away for inciting to riot (another wild slapstick sequence) and we see him last still in flight from groups, as a flock of eager sportswomen pursues him through the nudist camp. *I'm All Right, Jack* offers no answer to the expertly stated menace of people who "want something for nothing," but it's one of the few comedies of recent memory that asks questions and gets laughs while doing it.—JOSEPH KOSTOLEFSKY

### *Rosemary*

Written and directed by Erich Kuby and Rolf Thiele. Lyrics by Mario Adorf and Jo Herbst. With Nadja Tiller and Peter Van Eyck.

The central figure in *Rosemary* is based on fact: in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1957, a call-girl named Rosemarie Nitribitt, whose clientele numbered many important German industrialists, was murdered in her apartment. She was suspected of selling industrial secrets to a foreign agent, having taken down on a tape recorder the confidences of her bedfellows. Her murder was not solved.

Erich Kuby and Rolf Thiele (who also directed) have used these facts in constructing their screenplay for this West German film. From the tutelage of two street musicians, under whose control she operates as a prostitute, Rosemary moves up in the social scale, shedding her trenchcoat for more modish apparel and her basement room for more lavish surroundings. Her success in the shadows of the industrial world is complete until, ironically enough, her efforts at private enterprise when she attempts blackmail with the incriminating tape recordings she has made prove to be her undoing.

Rosemary's successful rise is linked with the postwar economic recovery of Western Germany. The French industrialist who instigates the scheme of the tape recordings, as a means



of acquiring valuable information for his own purposes, envisions Rosemary as a contemporary DuBarry, a figure of influence and power behind the throne, in this case occupied by the industrial magnates whose pivotal position in international affairs makes them the representatives of the new Germany, examples of the proverbial German efficiency.

It is this world of cartels and corruption that Kuby and Thiele have focused on with a biting, sardonic humor. Their device for doing so is the pair of street musicians, who serve as a chorus, commenting on the action in musical interludes reminiscent in both style and content of *The Threepenny Opera*. Their bitter, caustic lyrics on the ills, the depravities, and the follies of a capitalist society set the tone of cynical pessimism and nihilism for the film. (Unfortunately, the English subtitles do not always do full justice to the lyrics.) This attitude is expressed further in a sound track which exaggerates mechanical sounds to the level where they seem to have an independent existence of their own, and in a series of visual symbols designed as the equivalent of the verbal satire—the fleet of black Mercedes in which the industrialists silently prowl the city; the parade of the capitalists through the hotel lobby; the scene in the cabaret, with the row of call-girls seated at the bar and the stylized, mechanical dancing; the scene in the basement as the two pimps audition new prospects to replace Rosemary. At its best, this technique is striking, as in the murder scene: the cars waiting in a row in the street outside Rosemary's apartment drive off



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as if with wills of their own after the signal of her murder is given, lending an almost surreal element to the action. At its worst, the emphasis on technique degenerates into an excessive use of the zoom lens shot.

In sum, the style is the film. Since many of the characters border on caricature, or are used as symbols, there is little chance for development of characterization. However, Nadja Tiller, with her blonde hair, large eyes, and sensual mouth, is effective in portraying the amoral, feline quality resident in Rosemary, and Mario Adorf and Jo Herbst (who collaborated on the lyrics) project the proper air of moral depravity as the street musicians. The film is weakest in depicting any moral force representing the side of "the good" arrayed against these forces of darkness and corruption. The religious student with his tracts and prophecies of doom who stands for the voice of moral consciousness is too weak and ineffective to carry any persuasiveness, and his relationship with Rosemary is ill-defined. Perhaps, however, this is a necessary part of the despairing attitude of the film. On the whole, the film seems more intent in evoking an atmosphere of moral corruption than in probing very deeply into the political and economic concomitants of such corruption. But if the film lacks any strong convictions one way or another, it is at least largely successful in its use of technique to support an attitude, and it succeeds in making some unsettling comments on the current moral status of Western civilization, in which the rise of a Rosemary Nitribitt is not viewed as an isolated phenomenon.

—WILLIAM BERNHARDT

### *Jazz on a Summer's Day*

Produced and directed by Bert Stern. Script and continuity by Arnold Pearl and Albert D'Annibile. Musical director: George Avakian. Sound: Columbia Records. Camera: Bert Stern, Courtney Hafela, Ray Phealan.

In *Jazz on a Summer's Day* Bert Stern has rescued jazz from its film and television doldrums. He may not have given it back to the jazz-lovers, but he has made a sincere effort to break the mass media association between jazz and crime. No previous film has treated jazz with more expressive force, and perhaps only Gjon Mili's *Jamming the Blues* (1944) may be compared with it.\* In view of the present fate of jazz on TV, Stern's achievement becomes singular—a jazz background accompanying jazz musicians! He has achieved a kind of breakthrough by proving that jazz, *per se*, can be cinematically interesting. The film received unanimous praise from the New York reviewers (though Bosley Crowther worried that only "cats" might "dig" all that music); Stern's use of color is exciting and there are several stirring musical moments. But in spite of its rave notices, Stern's film is not entirely successful; and while I am in complete sympathy with his efforts, I would like to register a few dissenting remarks.

The first part of the film presents the afternoon part of the Newport Jazz Festival while the second is devoted to the evening. The film's "continuity" is thus one of chronology rather than a sustained point of view. The film-makers, perhaps remembering an LP record of a few years ago, "Jazz for People Who Hate Jazz," have chosen to concentrate on big names—and singers, at that: of the nineteen numbers rendered by fourteen performers or groups, no less than *eleven* are vocals.

The inclusion of only one number by Thelonious Monk as against four by Louis Armstrong (including the inevitable "Saints") tips the film's artistic balance, especially considering the frequency of Armstrong's TV appearances. But Armstrong played well that night; the film-makers' real lapse of taste was their inclusion of Armstrong's pointless set of opening remarks, including an off-color joke.†

\* Some of James Agee's comments on Mili's film might be applied to Stern's. See *Agee on Film*, New York, 1958, pp. 131–32.

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The film highlights performers whose music is eminently *physical*. This is not meant as criticism, but rather to point out that Stern has recognized the basic problem faced by anyone trying to film performing jazzmen. Aside from jazz backgrounds on private-eye TV shows, most of the attempts at jazz programming have failed because, bluntly, it is boring to watch a static, frontal shot of musicians playing in a studio. In feature-length films, such as *I Want to Live!*, jazz groups are usually presented in odd-angle shots, and then only briefly. Stern solves the problem in part by avoiding the static frontal shot except when a group is being introduced. Moreover, he concentrates on players who are visually interesting, if not eccentric: Jimmy Giuffre bobs, Gerry Mulligan rocks, George Shearing bounces, blues shouter Big Maybelle bumps, Chuck Berry grinds, Armstrong grimaces, Anita O'Day grins, and Chico Hamilton perspires. This emphasis works well: except for Berry, a gyrating rhythm-and-blues singer, these performers are exciting, both musically and visually. Some of the sequences are excellent: Giuffre seems to coax the music out of his tenor sax and Chico Hamilton, bending over his drums, his hands below the camera view, seems mesmerized by his solo—part rhythm, part ritual. But the more introspective soloists suffer from Stern's emphasis. Monk's appearance is almost solely as accompanist. His playing of his own haunting theme, "Blue Monk," is inappropriately used to counterpoint shots of the America Cup trial races. This is one of three unsuccessful attempts at synchronizing jazz improvisation with boat racing. "Blue Monk" was not conceived with sailboats in mind, and tenor saxist Sonny Stitt's searing, up-tempo solo on "The Blues" is about anything *but* yachting.

Newport—if not jazz—seems to draw a sizeable audience of grotesques and eccentrics, and Stern has caught several of them in action: gum-chewers, fanatics being "sent," and impromptu dancers. There is one remarkable shot of a spectre-like, loose-limbed dancer, his head hidden in the darkness, whose baggy blue suit seems to be dancing by itself—a jitterbugging scarecrow. There are several humorous mo-



*Dinah Washington in Bert Stern's  
JAZZ ON A SUMMER'S DAY.*

ments. Early in the film three or four Newport dowagers are shown reacting unfavorably to the jazz invasion. But again the conception wavers, for along with the social satire comes a dose of cuteness that has nothing to do with jazz—especially in an amusement park sequence with Eli's Chosen Six playing Dixieland while riding in a miniature train. And when, in a beautifully photographed sequence, the Chosen Six are shown playing soulful music at the water's edge at sunset—a rich, blue sunset—we have the Bert Stern of the vodka ads or the arty, out-of-focus *Esquire* layouts (cheesecake by way of French impressionism).

The closing sequence of Mahalia Jackson's gospel singing is perhaps the most musically exciting part of *Jazz on a Summer's Day*. The camera captures the halo-like light that enveloped Miss Jackson as she sang "Didn't It Rain," the "Lord's Prayer," and the rousing "Shout All Over"—her breath vaporizing in the sea air as a kind of wrathful counterpoint to her words. Her girlish delight in the audience's applause is, along with Thelonious Monk's shy retreat from the stage after "Blue Monk," one of the film's most charming moments. It serves to illustrate that a film about jazz need not be padded with sailboats, merry-go-rounds, and so on—that the intimate, low-keyed moments can be as rewarding as the extroverted ones.

—ALFRED APPEL, JR.

## Book Reviews

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*Agee on Film: Volume 2*, by James Agee, with an introduction by John Huston. (New York: McDowell-Obolesky, 1960.)

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James Agee, as demonstrated in Volume 1 of *Agee on Film*, was a perceptive and articulate witness to the films and society of part of our time. This second volume attempts to show Agee as creator, and succeeds in that and in other and subtler things.

In Volume 1, the case in point was Agee writing of his reactions to seeing films, and it is an engrossing, intense, often brilliant collection of articles. Volume 2 is a collection of scripts (*Noa Noa*, *African Queen*, *Night of the Hunter*, *The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky*, *Blue Hotel*) which Agee wrote. But a script is not a film, and although the book-buying public is experienced in film watching, not many are adept at script reading. In addition, neither *Noa Noa* nor *Blue Hotel* were ever filmed, although the latter appeared in a television version during the 1958 season of *Omnibus*.

The basic value of the scripts would seem to be as an intimation of what Agee's work as director might have been had he reached what seems to many his ultimate destination. The descriptive elements in Agee's scripts are obviously the mark of someone who knew what film was about. The pity, moreover, was that neither Agee nor anyone who was even in the same world of sensitivity and perceptiveness as he had the chance to direct the scripts, other than John Huston's *African Queen* and possibly Bretaigne Windust's *Bride Comes to Yellow Sky*. Of the other scripts the only other one to be realized was *Night of the Hunter* for which Charles Laughton was given a director's credit.

Agee's filmic vision is astounding, especially in the script of *Noa Noa*, a projected film on the life of Paul Gauguin, permeated with Agee's

sympathy and respect. The script is moved forward not by the usual sound-film "screenplay" which in most cases hasn't gotten much past the "All-Talkie" technique, but by careful and constant trespasses into the areas of design and direction. The contrast between Europe and Tahiti is vivid in the reader's eye, and the relationship between Gauguin and Tehura moves more by subtle advances of direction than dialogue. Most interesting is the funeral of King Pomare IV, written as editor's, director's, and conductor's notes. Agee puts it quite specifically:

Note: The funeral sequence is to be cut rigidly to the music of Chopin's Funeral March. I will indicate the cuts and shots exactly, but serve warning that without the melody to key it to, it will be hard to read, or to imagine the effectiveness of. I will write out and enclose the melody, as a key; the scoring, and performance should be those of a French deep provincial military band of the period: rather shrill and squeaky, and not very well played, yet with genuine solemnity.

In addition to being a virtuoso collection of scripts, *Agee on Film: Volume 2* is a kind of monument: to what Agee might have done as a director; to the idea that perhaps films shouldn't be made on assembly lines; and to the thought that perhaps what the American film industry has yet to understand is the value of the kind of personal authorship which Agee was offering.—HENRY BREITROSE

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Deals with the prehistory of the motion picture. Written in a sprightly but not journalistic style, it is a satisfactory introduction to the various devices used to produce moving images, or the illusion thereof, for some centuries before the invention of the camera and projector we know.

## Book Reviews

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It is graced with a bibliography but no notes, however, and this makes it useless concerning more recent times—where accurate historiography is required to deal with the vexed questions of who exactly did what and when, and how it can be proved. For conclusive evidence on the Edison developments, for example, we must still await publication of Gordon Hendricks' exhaustive research through the Edison archives and many other sources; his work is soon to be published by the University of California Press.



*Television Crime-Drama: Its Impact on Children and Adolescents*, by R. J. Thomson. (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1959. 25s.) This is a report on the social-psychological research under way for the past several years in the Department of Audio-Visual Aids at the University of Melbourne. While its findings are necessarily tentative (for example, that children seem to possess unsuspected resources of "perceptual defence" and that fantasy release through violent images seems neither to reduce nor augment the strength of aggressive impulses) the work is unusually sophisticated and attempts to cope with film-going as a human experience rather than merely an experimental situation. For the general reader the volume is made difficult by the inclusion of many tables and a good deal of jargon; for the specialist it is vitiated somewhat by a reliance on written questionnaires as the basic method of obtaining data. With synchronized strips of ultraviolet photographs of children's reactions to test films.

*TV Tape Commercials*, by Harry Wayne McMahan. (New York: Hastings House, 1960. \$4.50.) Contains some historical and practical information which, in conjunction with a book such as Albert Abramson's *Electronic Motion Picture* (University of California Press, 1955; \$5.00), opens up possibilities for experimental tape production methods.

### New Periodicals

*Cine Cubano*, published as part of the rapidly expanding Cuban propaganda effort, is issued by the Oficinas ICAIC, Edificio "Atlantic," 23 y 12, Vedado, Havana. It discloses an orientation toward Italian neorealism above all, though articles deal with the French new wave, Bergman, relations between film and literature, and what seems to have been a flattering visit by Gerard Phillippe. A monthly appearance is planned, at \$0.25 per issue or \$3.00 per year.

An editorial manifesto entitled "Realities and Perspectives of a New Cinema" summarizes the intentions of the Cuban film-makers thus: 1. It will be an artistic cinema. 2. It will be a national cinema. 3. It will be a nonconformist cinema. 4. It will be a low-cost cinema. 5. It will be a commercial cinema. 6. It will be a technically finished cinema. (A "Centro de Estudios Cinematográficos" is to be set up in Havana.)

The first issue of *Cine Cubano* is nicely printed, with copious illustrations—including a photo story of a visit by Castro to a film studio, and many photos of Zavattini during an interview.

*Cinespana*, organ of the Spanish export agency Uniespaña, is published at Castello, 18, Madrid. (No price given.) It is available in English and is full of glamor shots of pretty starlets, interviews with producers, and articles whose intellectual oddity is only surpassed by their linguistic quirks and misspellings: the latest issue contains an absolutely astounding article on "The Spanish Civil War a Source of Ideas for the Cinema." The objective of the publication is a

wider market for Spanish films, especially in Latin America.

*Études Cinématographiques* is edited by Henri Agel and Georges-Albert Astre and published by M. J. Minard, *Lettres Modernes*, 73, rue du Cardinal-Lemoine, Paris 5<sup>e</sup>, France; subscriptions are 37 NF. The first issue is devoted to "Baroque et Cinéma," and contains several general articles on baroque art and the idea of the baroque as it can be applied to film. There are also articles on Fellini, the German cinema, Max Ophüls, and Bergman. The editors begin with

the note: "Le titre l'indique: il s'agit d'*Études*, non point d'impressions, de reportages ou de polémiques." And the result, at least as manifested in the first number (which is a squarish pocketbook in format, without illustrations), is a nice blend of art history and philosophical argument; it turns attention to a side of film art generally not very fashionable these days: that of deliberate artifice, elaboration, astonishment. But the fascination is not unambiguous. As the brief article on Fellini says, "Le baroque est le courant impur et empoisonné de l'art. Il est sa face magique, nocturne et sacrilège."

## Correspondence & Controversy

### *Bazin's Ontology*

The late M. Bazin's essay "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" (*Film Quarterly*, Summer 1960) is a serious attempt to think out the fundamentals of the cinema. The best way to take it seriously, it seems to me, is to discuss it.

Persuasive though M. Bazin's views are, I think they are founded on fundamental mistakes. These mistakes, when worked out, lead to his implicit conclusion that neorealism is the purest cinema. Both the mistakes and this highly unpalatable conclusion deserve to be challenged.

The most serious mistake is his attempt to draw parallels between the art of the cinema and the art of painting. Film is, perhaps, quite unlike any other medium; but it is surely most differentiated from painting and photography. "Cinema is also a language," M. Bazin concludes, which suggests he would have understood the argument that, in the closeness of its *presence*, film is more akin to poetry than to anything else.

The mistake of paralleling film and painting rests on a serious misunderstanding of the latter. Bazin argues that from the Renaissance to

the invention of photography painting is obsessed with trying to attain realism, i.e., imitate the outside world. He then argues that, as painting is essentially subjective, this striving is in vain and only the invention of the camera frees it from attempting "as complete an imitation as possible of the outside world." For Bazin the fact that the photographic image is produced by an "objective" machine, rather than a human hand, makes it fundamentally different from the painting.

Readers of Gombrich's *Art and Illusion* will know that this view of art is highly contentious, and that it in turn is based on an uncritical belief that an objective view of reality exists. The trouble is that we do not in fact know whether such an objective view exists and we *do* know that we can never realize it. This is due to the fact that our way of looking is governed by our mental sets. Whether the instrument intervening between perception and image in the creative process is a brush or a camera makes no essential difference: we look at a photograph just as subjectively as we look at a painting. Bazin has not only ignored optical and color distortion, the loss of the third dimension, and the effect of printing techniques in this man-



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—IAN JARVIE

London, England

## Entertainments

**BELLS ARE RINGING.** The Broadway musical was intimate but tawdry; Arthur Freed’s film is showy, lavish, and just a bit vacuous. Fortunately, the film is also mostly Judy Holliday, a contagious carrot-topped comedienne whose talents Hollywood has not sufficiently explored (nor exploited?). Assisted by cheery music (Jules Styne) and by witty Comden-Green lyrics, she snares the heart with “The Party’s Over,” tickles the funnybone with “Drop That Name,” and demolishes all resistance with her yen to return to the “Bonjour Tristesse Brass-i-ere Com-pa-ny.” The plot mixes the answering services, bookies, dumb detectives, and show-biz types in just about equal measures. Eddie Foy, Jr., Jean Stapleton, and Frank Gorshin contribute succinct characterizations; Dean Martin just oozes across the screen.

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duced by Belgian Henri Storck, it scrupulously avoids Disneyish anthropomorphisms, and its treatment of the Congolese, based on an eight-year stay by anthropologist Daniel Biebuyck, is equally sound. Its nature photography is superbly natural, and its human photography superbly human; its greatest achievement is to merge and balance the two in a reflection of the inextricable unity of jungle life. Probably the best ethnographic film ever made.

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**MASTERS OF THE CONGO JUNGLE.** A soberly ecological study, rather in the Flaherty manner, of the jungle and its human and other inhabitants. Pro-

duced by Belgian Henri Storck, it scrupulously avoids Disneyish anthropomorphisms, and its treatment of the Congolese, based on an eight-year stay by anthropologist Daniel Biebuyck, is equally sound. Its nature photography is superbly natural, and its human photography superbly human; its greatest achievement is to merge and balance the two in a reflection of the inextricable unity of jungle life. Probably the best ethnographic film ever made.

**OCEAN’S ELEVEN.** A kind of *Dolce Vita* stood on its head, in which five ex-infantrymen attack the safes of Las Vegas night spots. They succeed, then lose the loot; but the joke of the film turns out to be on us all, and nausea is the natural reaction, rather than the laughter at the end of *Treasure of Sierra Madre*. In this film, everyone in sight is corrupted by a creeping affluence taken as cool sophistication; the distinction between crime and ordinary American folkways such as tax evasion, petty theft, and expense-account finagling has vanished. (Writer Charles Lederer also wrote and directed *Never Steal Anything Small*.) It is a bit startling to find director Lewis Milestone working so near the end of the tether, but the film is neatly made.

**SPARTACUS.** In its battle scenes, *Spartacus* does succeed in convincing you that this might be another time and another civilization: you do not congratulate the actor on his extra pay whenever someone falls off a horse. For the rest, however, the jazzing up of parallels between Rome and the present does not work, despite easy laughs about the

made photographic machine, but he has forgotten the more vital point that we are the interpreters—and no instrument can escape *this* subjectivity.

If we bear these mistakes in mind we may be able to see more clearly why the cinema is such a powerful and mysterious medium: in it the creator controls the expressive resources of many other media including those where the abstract means are highly developed and the representational means are poorly developed

(music), and those where the situation is reversed (language), and at least one somewhere in the middle (photography). Add to this the stylization, movement, and abbreviation possible in the cinema and the amount the viewer is given to take in suggests a reason why what appears in the darkness “up there on the screen” communicates so much so strongly; what it is that makes for the *présence du cinéma*.

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word "subversive." Rome is populated only by ignobles and noble slaves—and Charles Laughton. The acting seems dislocated, as if scenes were shot years apart and the actors never met one another—which may be the case, since the film was in production for several years. John Gavin as Caesar acts like a youth impatient to make the varsity; Peter Ustinov is busy stealing scenes; Laughton is reticent and human; Jean Simmons is workmanly and sincere; Tony Curtis recites poetry and resists what must be the oddest attempted seduction ever filmed; Olivier uses his many tricks with skill. And Kirk Douglas as Spartacus is rousing athletic as usual. The film is distinguished by flawless photography, beautiful landscapes, and inordinate length. Stanley Kubrick directed.

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## Production Report

EDITED BY RICHARD GERCKEN

### Letter from Mexico

The activities of the Mexican cinema are not easy to report. Contributing to the confusion are the (comparatively) large number of films produced each year, controversy about censorship and weaknesses in the national cinema law, the more or less centralized system of film-financing, the peculiar nature of the market, and a "closed-shop" attitude in most of the senior guilds.

Some 80 to 100 features are required each year just to maintain employment and keep the industry alive. Accordingly quality often suffers. Several film-makers told me privately that the national distributors have about 40 features at present in their vaults, too poorly made to be released. If these begin to come out in some amended form, this will undoubtedly tend to reduce the number of new films produced, causing some hardship throughout the trade.

A few years ago a wave of "nudist" films, which were extremely successful at the box-office, gave rise to criticisms of the prevailing system of censorship, and the supporters of increased vigilance in the cinema now include some

of the leading critics. Even directors who have in the past suffered from a censor's arbitrary excisions readily admit that some form of censorship is required in the present industry. Censors are political appointees under the existing system and have no publicly acknowledged procedures. Producers are rarely willing to challenge their often anonymous decisions.

The national cinema law, written in 1949 and amended in 1952, is currently up for review. The government, through its Central Cinema Administration, is conducting public enquiries into the operation of the law. Within the trade it is generally acknowledged to be a good law, but impossible to administer. Imposed on an already existing financial structure, it has, various directors think, been the victim of the usual abuses of monopoly. Monopoly has in fact been a major concern of the various protagonists in the early discussions and some commentators despair of ever seeing the talk concentrate on the essential problem—how to increase the quality of the average Mexican film.

Financing is almost entirely through distributors, who advance a percentage

of the production costs in return for their territorial rights. They, in turn, tend to get their money from the National Cinema Bank (again an agency of the government) whose commissioners include the administrative heads of the three large distributors and a number of producers, appointed by the producers' association for a short term. Until a few years ago the director of the Cinema Bank was a financier more interested in organizing the means of distribution than in the quality of individual pictures. But his successor, the present director, Federico Heuer, has a quite different reputation, and many directors look forward to an increase in his influence.

The market for Mexican films is not so much Mexico itself as all Latin America—and the audience in Latin America is chiefly composed of poor people, concerned about their means of existence and seeking only diversion in their films. Thus the directors who remain popular with the producers and distributors are those who have commercial successes not only in Mexico (which may account for only about 35 per cent of the income) but also in Latin America. This tends to



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limit the growth and variety of the Mexican product, and to tie it to the economic and cultural changes in Latin America. Thus film follows rather than leads, as many film-makers would like it to. The producers are solidly organized whereas the directors are comparatively weak. But even here their own restrictive practices tend to keep out new blood, and restrict the number of directors to the present 40 or so. With only a few exceptions it is the established directors with many years of experience who manage to snatch a moment of freedom to turn out an individual picture—or at least a few scenes which come to life for them and with which they can identify. The commercial processes have taken a particularly high toll among directors, whose earlier work, more often than not, is far superior to their later.

But it is here that Luis Buñuel has chosen principally to work since 1946, and he has just recently received private support for a script and a film of his choice. The backing comes from the husband of one of Mexico's leading actresses, Sylvia Pinal, who will have a part in the film—a contingency which Buñuel does not seem at all to regret. He is jovially rueful about the dangers of the freedom his current project gives him. After this picture, which is scheduled for November, he has agreed to do a film in Cuba for Barbachano Ponce, the young producer of his recent *Nazarin* (which took a price at Cannes). Barbachano earlier produced *Raíces* (director Benito Alazraki), *Torero* (Carlos Velo), *Sonatas* (Juan Bardem, in Spain), and he is just completing *Cuba Baila* which he produced in Cuba with the young Cuban shorts director Julio Garcia Espinoza making his first feature. It is a story set around the desire of a middle-class Havana family to give their daughter the traditional and socially obligatory dance for her fifteenth birthday. It will be interesting to compare his treatment with that of another Mexican director Alfredo Crevenna whose current hit *Quinceañera* tackles the same subject head-on, extracting every ounce of predictable sentiment. Barbachano seems to have another program in mind. Having agreed to a stipulation of the directors' guild not to produce films in Mexico for two years (he has been working in Spain and Cuba), he will be eligible next March to direct his first feature. At this time he will begin work on a trilogy of contemporary Mexican life, dealing with the Indians and the middle and upper classes in turn. He gives the impression of wishing to approach this fruitful field seriously.

At present he keeps his company alive by producing four weekly news features for theatrical release. He has to pay to

get them into the theaters (monopolies) but his revenue comes from the advertising they contain. Carlos Velo is a regular member of his staff, he has trained and is still helping in various ways some of the young members of the new and flourishing Cuban industry, and his films are consistently invited to the European festivals, usually being honored there. Just as consistently, the Mexican producers send another film as the official entry.

*Macario*, produced by José Luis Celis for Clasa Films, directed by Roberto Gavaldón and photographed by Gabriel Figueroa, was this year's entry at Cannes, and is enjoying a long popular run in the principal Mexican cities to which it has so far been released. It is a simple tale of poverty, death and hunger, but is told romantically as a fairy tale rather than realistically as a tragedy. Its origin is in a Hans Christian Andersen story, reworked into the indigenous Mexican folk culture, "discovered" there by American author Bruno Traven (a pseudonym for an otherwise anonymous writer, also author of *The Treasure of Sierra Madre*), rewritten by him as a novella which was first published in the United States, and finally rewritten for the screen. Its simplicity and its romantic style will obviously be taken two ways—either as false and "corny" or as appropriate to its subject and delightful. In fact, in the contemporary Mexican cinema it is usually easier (and more profitable) to approach the subject of poverty obliquely, as here.

Of the others—Alejandro Galindo has completed shooting *Nuestro es Mañana* (Alameda Films) from his own script. Julio Bracho returned recently, and enthusiastically, from Karlov Vary where his new picture *La Sombra de Caudillo* received the jury president's prize. The film was made without a formal producer and was financed by a union of film workers interested in receiving the revenue from a film to build a union center. They, including the actors, contributed their services free. Roberto Gavaldón, following *Macario* with a commercial action drama, is now preparing *La Rosa Blanca*, again for Clasa with Celis as producer and Figueroa as cameraman, and again from a Bruno Traven story—this time the subject is the oil expropriations administered by former President Cardenas. This is being made to fulfil an obligation to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Mexican Revolution (1910). Emelio Fernández, ominously inactive, except as an actor in the last several years, is now in the process of preparing a subject for the same purpose—and also, like Bracho's film, financed by a trade union, although this

time outside the industry. But details of this and other developments will have to wait for a later article which will attempt to review the Mexican cinema since 1945.—COLIN YOUNG

## New Indian Directors

Although the Indian film industry stands second in the world in the number of films produced, Indian directors capable of doing outstanding work are unfortunately very few. A majority of producers and directors seem interested only in financial gain. Sometimes artistically impressive films prove commercial failures; this is the reason why few directors have the courage or financial backing to embark upon unconventional pictures. An exception is Satyajit Ray who has brought unconventionalism to our screen and enhanced the artistic progress of Bengali films.

Ray, thus far the only real hope of the Indian film industry, has now done six films. Besides his well-known trilogy, he has made *Parash Pather* (*Touchstone*), *Jalsaghar* (*Music Room*—reviewed in the Spring 1960 *Quarterly*), and *Devi* (*The Goddess*). *Devi*, released early in 1960, is based on a famous short story concerning Hindu religious superstition, depicting the social pattern of Bengal of a century ago. As in Ray's other films the photography and editing are brilliant. Ray's approach to the cinema is truly Indian. His works are always adaptations of classical stories, and he seems to work towards rediscovery of his country. His films are really more melodic than dramatic.

At present Ray is engaged in making a five-reel documentary on the life of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, commemorating his centenary.

Ritwik Ghatak is another Calcutta director who is attempting to do outstanding work. He has completed three films, all concerned with significant human values. His first film, *Ajaantrik* (*Non-Machine*), was a very original picture about a young man and his love for the old taxicab by which he earns a living. Ghatak's second picture, *Bari Thekey Palie* (*Fleeing from Home*), depicted the simultaneous existence of sky-high riches and acute poverty in Calcutta, seen through the eyes of a young boy who has fled his village home. *Meghe Dhaka Tara* (*Star Under the Cover of Cloud*) is a tragic film of a beautiful young student who sacrifices education, love, and health for the sake of her family. Ghatak shows ability, but the dramatic potentialities of his scripts are not always fully realized, and he seems unable to resist the temptation of adding unnecessary songs to his films.

Bimal Roy is regarded as the most unconventional film-maker of the decade in Bombay. He has been directing realistic films there since 1953. He is known and respected by the vast majority of film-goers, and all his work bears testimony to a highly civilized, refined, and artistic mind. Roy attaches great importance to the creation of strong emotional reactions in the audience; there is a strong human element in his films which cover a wide variety of subjects and people but always concentrate on thematic material of some substance. *Udayar Pathay (Road to Rising)* dealt with capital and labor. *Do Bigha Zemin (Two-Thirds of an Acre)*, with capital and the farm. *Naukri* studied unemployment, and *Devdas* treated the emotional immaturity and escapism of a young man disappointed in love. Roy's last film *Sujata* treated caste prejudice. The Prime Minister gave Roy a certificate in appreciation of the good qualities of this film which was entered this year at the Cannes Festival.

V. Shantaram is a director of long-established reputation here. He has been at work in the cinema since the '30s, and his films usually treat themes

of some social significance. *Do Ankhen Bara Haath (Two Eyes, Twelve Hands—1957)*, for example, dealt with the rehabilitation of criminals. Shantaram's films are considered a healthy, vigorous reaction against academicism. He has certainly played an important role in the history of Indian cinema, and some of his films have won recognition abroad; it is no wonder that Shantaram is considered a pillar of our industry. It must be admitted, however, that he was greatly influenced by the wave of American films that flooded our screens during the '20s and '30s, and his pictures are often marred by excessive song and dance and by weak scripts.

Another established director is Mehboob Khan who has also been making films since the '30s, having had his own company since 1942. Two of his productions from the '40s, *Roti (Bread)* and *Aurat (Woman)* were among the most outstanding pictures ever filmed in India about the soil and the people. Khan's last and possibly best film *Mother India (1957)*, in color, told of a young widow rearing two children in poverty. His technique seems to improve from picture to picture. He is also known as an Indian star-maker.

A South Indian director worthy of mention is S. S. Vasan, considered one of the best directors of our Hindi screen. His films have usually dealt bravely with social problems but have always enjoyed great commercial success. The technical quality of his films is of a high standard. His last picture *Paigham (Message)*, released early in 1960, treated the capital-labor dispute, advocating peaceful co-existence. Unfortunately the theory was presented through a trite script.

In conclusion, then, a new school of unconventional young film-makers seems to be slowly taking shape in Calcutta. While it may be premature to treat these directors as part of a "movement," Satyajit Ray has certainly brought into existence a new trend of thought in Bengali film-making. There is also, to be sure, an unfortunate tendency to copy Ray; but we can hopefully await some work of the highest artistic standard from this young group.

—SUDHINDRA KUMAR RAY

[Mr. Ray—no relation to Satyajit Ray—teaches in a Higher Secondary School in Calcutta; he is a member of the Calcutta Film Society and has been a film student for many years.]

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