

# The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release  
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## 70 YEARS OF SOVIET FILMMAKING: FROM THE ARCHIVES

May 1 - July 19, 1992

A historical survey of filmmaking in the Soviet Union from 1922 through 1991 is presented at The Museum of Modern Art from May 1 through July 19, 1992. Designed to illuminate the singular accomplishments and experimentation in Soviet cinema, **70 YEARS OF SOVIET FILMMAKING: FROM THE ARCHIVES** comprises films drawn primarily from the holdings of the Museum's film archive and the Pacific Film Archive, at the University Art Museum, Berkeley. The series highlights the innovative silent period, the early sound films of the 1930s, and the new generation of filmmakers who emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin declared cinema the most important of all the arts, and it became an integral part of the Soviet revolution. Later, it would reflect the stagnation and problematic evolution of the country's communist system.

The films presented in May, which exemplify the divergence of styles and genres within the Soviet silent cinema, is inaugurated with the first Bolshevik feature film, *Red Imps* (1923), by the Georgian director Ivan Perestiani. Silent cinema peaked in the years 1926 and 1927, when it matured into a varied and rich brand of revolutionary culture with such masterpieces as Vsevolod Pudovkin's *Mother* (1926) and Sergei Eisenstein's *October* (1928), both of which are in the exhibition. Classic works by other master filmmakers, such as Dziga Vertov and Alexander Dovzhenko are also included.

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Films by lesser-known directors include the American premiere of Vladimir Vilner's *Benya Krik* (1926) and Yuri Zhelyabuzhsky's *The Cigarette Girl from Musselprom* (1924) and *The Station Master* (1925).

The June program surveys the difficult period of the 1930s and the protracted transition to sound for a film industry which had perfected the idea of visual communication. The need for experimentation, partly to compensate for lack of proper equipment, and early curiosity about the use of sound can be traced in films as diverse as Vertov's *Enthusiasm* (1930), which uses sound experimentally, and Nikolai Ekk's *The Road to Life* (1931), the first dialogue film made in the Soviet Union.

Soviet filmmaking was sparse in the 1940s due to World War II and repression from the Communist Party; production fell from a peak of around 100 films a year in the 1930s to ten films in the late 1940s. However, the decade saw the making of Eisenstein's controversial trilogy *Ivan the Terrible* (1941-46), which will be featured in mid-June at the Museum.

The concluding month of the series highlights works from various film studios throughout the republics of the Soviet Union. Many of these films were liberated from their banned status in 1987, during the early period of *glasnost*, when the Filmmakers' Union was in the vanguard of the political changes. Included are films from the "new wave" period of the 1960s, such as Andrei Tarkovsky's *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) and the visionary Sergei Paradjanov's *Shadows of Our Forgotten Ancestors* (1964). Works of the 1970s and 1980s by a new generation openly or metaphorically criticize a society of repression and stagnation. Examples include Elem Klimov's *Farewell* (1982) and Kira Muratova's *The Asthenic Syndrome* (1989). A selection of recent documentaries include Vladimir Shevchenko's *Chernobyl: Chronicle of Difficult*

*Weeks* (1987). Shevchenko's film crew was the first to cover this nuclear disaster and he later died as a result of exposure to radiation.

Many of the silent films are shown in the original versions with Russian intertitles, but are accompanied either by extensive synopses and/or written English translations of Russian intertitles. Some films are accompanied by live voice-over translations in English.

**70 YEARS OF SOVIET FILMMAKING: FROM THE ARCHIVES** was organized by Jytte Jensen, assistant curator, Department of Film.

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For further information or film stills, please contact Barbara Marshall, film press representative, Department of Public Information, 212/708-9752.