On the 50th anniversary of the death of Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein

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Fifty years ago, on February 11, 1948, the Soviet film director Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein died of a heart attack at the age of fifty. Eisenstein was probably the greatest director ever to work in the film medium. He was an innovator, a teacher, a theoretician, and, above all, a practical worker in films. In his career can be seen the tremendous flowering of the arts—especially the cinema—in the first years of the workers' state and its subsequent degeneration under the Stalinist bureaucracy after 1925. The spirited and industrious Eisenstein, in a career spanning 25 years, was able to complete only six films—and most of these with approved major revisions and under the eyes of the Stalinist censors. After 1925, his life became primarily a series of unrealized projects.

Sergei Eisenstein was born on January 23, 1898, to assimilated and baptized Jewish parents in Riga, Tsarist Russia. His father was a conservative, an architect and civil engineer for the city of Riga. His parents separated in 1905, and Eisenstein spent his childhood in both Riga and St. Petersburg. He received a good education and learned to speak French, German, and English fluently. Under pressure from his father, Eisenstein trained as a civil engineer, but all of his spare moments were spent attending the theater or thinking about it.

The Bolshevik Revolution changed everything for him. At the same time as Eisenstein's father entered the White Guards, Eisenstein entered the Red Army. Posted at the front as a civil engineer, he used every opportunity to attach himself to the theater and agitational work being done by the Red Army. The Civil War was the school for many of the great figures of Soviet film. Eisenstein, Tisse, Dziga Vertov, and Pudovkin all were with the Agit trains or shot newsreels at the front. Both the Agit trains, which traveled to critical areas to agitate and educate among troops, workers, and peasants; and the newsreels, filmed by Bolsheviks with a camera in one hand and a gun in the other, elevated art to a new level—that of a weapon. It was the cinema that was to prove the most powerful of all and to merit Lenin's comment to Lunacharsky in 1922, that "of all the arts for us the cinema was the most important."(1)

Revolutionary Art

By the end of the Civil War, Eisenstein had completely shed his career as a civil engineer and was seeking a theater group to join. The Bolshevik Revolution had ushered in a veritable golden age of the arts. Within the criterion of support to the Revolution, myriad schools of aesthetics sprang up, each enthusiastically seeking a way to express the power of the revolution through art and each having its own theater group, magazine, writers' circle, etc. As Soviet film director Igor Yutkevich recalled in 1966:

"They were astonishing and wonderful days—the beginnings of a revolutionary art. When we talk about the years when we started artistic work, people are always surprised by the birth-dates of almost all the directors and the major artists of those times. We were incredibly young! We were sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds when we entered upon our artistic lives. The explanation is quite simple: the Revolution had made way for the young. It has to be remembered that an entire generation had disappeared. Our elders had been dispersed throughout the country, or had perished in the Civil War, or had left Russia. Hence the Republic lacked a clear organization, lacked people; and our way in was easy—the country wanted us to work, the country needed people in every department of culture.

"This was a period of tumultuous expansion for Soviet art. It is difficult now to imagine how it was ... in Leningrad, for instance, in 1919 or 1920 ... There had never been so many theaters (and incidentally, at that time theaters were free); never had so many books—particularly volumes of poetry—appeared. Never had there been so much experiment in the theater and in painting."(2)

In the midst of this vast laboratory of the arts, Eisenstein applied to the theater group and school led by the great and controversial director, Vsevelod Meyerhold, and was accepted. Meyerhold had broken from the traditional "naturalist" theater and stressed spectacle and "biomechanics" (precise stage movement and acrobatics) in his classes. Although Eisenstein had applied for training as a designer, Meyerhold made him and every other student participate in every aspect of production, including acting. Though not primarily a film director, Meyerhold taught or influenced the majority of film directors who emerged from this period. He was to die before Stalin's firing squad in 1939.

Eisenstein may have officially been the designer on many of the subsequent productions up through his affiliation with the Proletkult Theater, but was actually fulfilling the role of director more and more. Increasingly, he brought into each production his impatience with the restrictions of the theater. For the production of Jack London's *The Mexican*, on which he was designer, he staged the climactic scene, an actual boxing match, in front of the curtain. Ordinarily, such a scene would have taken place off-stage and been merely referred to in the play. For the production of *Enough Simplicity in Every Wise Man*, which he directed, he introduced circus acts (including a tightrope walker) and a short film to depict the main character's diary. For the production of *Gas Masks*, which he directed, he moved the play entirely out of the theater and staged it in a gas factory. The play, which depicted life in a gas factory, ended each performance as the new shift came to work.

Dialectics of Montage

It was clear to Eisenstein that he was moving closer and closer to film.

Each experiment negated the one before. As Eisenstein was aware, it was the Russian Revolution that pushed him further each time. What dominated him as well as most artists and writers in the young workers' state was the search for the most powerful means to reflect the Revolution in the mirror of art. *Gas Masks* was the crossover point for Eisenstein. More than any previous production, this was cinema without film. All of the theatrical forms and conventions—both new and old—had become an artistic burden and had to be thrown off, negated and subsumed in a higher form.

In 1924, Proletkult Theater offered him the job of directing the first of eight episodes of the film series *Towards the Dictatorship*. As it turned out, only Eisenstein's episode, *Strike*, was made, but it changed the direction of Soviet cinema. *Strike* is about the development and destruction of a strike in Tsarist Russia. It shows the tremendous strength and energy of the working class as well as the use of agents provocateurs and armed troops by the ruling class. It ends with a powerful superimposition of a bull being slaughtered over a scene of massacred workers.

Eisenstein brought everything he had learned up to then into the making of *Strike*. For the first time he introduced the concept of "montage," that is, the juxtaposing of two film images to produce a new idea. In his theater work, he had devised the "montage of attractions," which was the throwing at an audience of shocking, spectacular scenes, totally unexpected in a theater. In *Strike*, he went much further. It was a complete denial of the documentary method with which any other director might have made the film. It was extremely well received, though some critics objected to its "eccentricity."

In this first film, Eisenstein also pioneered in the portrayal of the working class as collective hero. The immediate precedent for this was the regularly held mass spectacle The Storming of the Winter Palace, which was staged at the Winter Palace and involved thousands of non-professional actors—many of whom had been actual participants in the event. The filming of *Strike* involved Eisenstein further in theoretical work. More than any other Soviet director, he was concerned with questions of philosophical method. Throughout his life, he felt that cinema—the highest of arts—must negate and subsume all other arts. Unlike many of the "leftists" in the arts in this early period, he felt that bourgeois culture could not be discarded, but must be learned from and taken into the creation of socialist art. Incredibly erudite, he never failed to bring the greatest of bourgeois and earlier culture into his film work and his teaching. The original germ for his concept of film montage, he often stated, was the development of Japanese ideograms.

From his earliest days in the theater, Eisenstein had sought the cinematic equivalent of the dialectical method. He relates that this became a conscious philosophical struggle when one of his students brought to his attention that his classes were paralleling those across the hall, on philosophy.

"I unexpectedly discovered the relation between the things I came across in my analytical work and what was going on around me ... [This stimulus] was enough to put on my desk the works of materialist dialecticians instead of those of aesthetics."(3)

Montage became for Eisenstein a method of penetrating reality. Montage is the unity and conflict of opposites in art. It was an attack by Eisenstein on the traditional method of constructing a film—the linkage of sequences in a smooth, undisturbing manner. In reference to his fellow director Pudovkin, with whom he had great differences, he wrote:

"In front of me lies a crumpled yellow sheet of paper. On it is a mysterious note: 'Linkage-P' and 'Collision-E.' This is a substantial trace of a heated bout on the subject of montage between P (Pudovkin) and E (myself)."(4)

Eisenstein compared montage to the explosions in an internal combustion engine that drove a car forward. Nowhere can this be seen better than in his next film *Battleship Potemkin* (or, as it is better known, *Potemkin*).

Inspiration

Potemkin was made in 1925 to celebrate the anniversary of the 1905 Revolution. The mutiny it depicts was originally to have been only one of many sequences in the revolutionary panorama. But as the work on the scenario proceeded, the mutiny, the enthusiastic reaction to it by the workers of Odessa, and the brutal repression by the Cossacks came to represent the essence of 1905. As a tribute to Eisenstein's genius, it is a film that remains as powerful today as the day it was made. It still regularly appears at the top of critics' lists of greatest films ever made. In 1933, in Indonesia, the mutinous crew of the Dutch battleship De Zeven Provincien claimed at their trial to have been inspired by *Potemkin*.

Potemkin is a conscious, scientifically calculated effort not only to capture on film the movement and spirit of the masses and the brutal reaction of the Tsarist government, but to evoke very powerful emotions in the viewer as well. Eisenstein was always concerned with bringing together the objective and the subjective through art; with his training as both engineer and artist, he was concerned with doing this by bringing together science and art. Throughout his films, every detail is planned carefully after the initial intuition. *Potemkin* also demonstrates that montage is not one-sidedly an editing technique, as is commonly assumed. Throughout the film we find counterpoint within shots, counterpoint between entire sequences, counterpoint of moods, tempos, tones, textures, faces, crowds. Every conflict expresses the basic one: the class conflict in Odessa and throughout Russia in revolutionary 1905.

The Odessa steps sequence in *Potemkin* is probably the most famous sequence ever put on film. It shows the Cossack onslaught on the citizens of Odessa who have gathered on the steps overlooking the harbor to greet the revolutionary Potemkin sailors. The sequence exemplifies everything Eisenstein said about montage as a series of explosions. Crowds surge; shots of marching white boots; sabers flash; enormous close-ups of faces fill the screen for fractions of seconds; as crowds surge up the stairs away from the Cossacks, a baby carriage travels down the long steps. The rhythm of the sequence is inexorable. Even after repeated viewings one cannot help being gripped emotionally.

Potemkin was the last film over which Eisenstein was to have complete control. He was next called upon by Sovkino, the Soviet film agency, to make a film for the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. The film, *October* (also called *Ten Days that Shook the World*), included important experiments with what Eisenstein called "intellectual montage," or the use of metaphorical devices to elaborate filmically certain ideas. But much more important was that this film, a history of the 1917 revolution, was being made during the height of the fight against the bureaucracy by the Left Opposition. Eisenstein was instructed—in the last stages of editing the film—to summarily slice out of *October* many of the leading participants in the revolution, notably Leon Trotsky. This Stalinist falsification resulted in an estimated one-third of the film being cut. Eisenstein's long-time collaborator Alexandrov reports that late one night, during the last stages of editing the film, Stalin unexpectedly came by the studios and was shown certain sequences, including a speech by Lenin. Stalin ordered that sequence, Amounting to about 3,000 feet, to be cut, saying, "Lenin's liberalism is no longer valid today."(5)

Eisenstein was then engaged to direct *Old and New (The General Line)*, a film about the bringing of modern agricultural techniques to the Soviet farmer. It is notable for Eisenstein's use of abstract color in the bull-mating sequence and the attempt to suggest sound in a silent film. The

film was completed in 1929, but not before Eisenstein was ordered by Stalin to reshoot a more sentimental ending.

In August 1929, Eisenstein and his collaborators Alexandrov and Tisse set off for a trip to Europe and North America. After lecturing and attending film congresses throughout Europe, they arrived in the United States in 1930 to work and to study modern film techniques. They were already armed with a contract signed with Jesse Lasky, the head of Paramount, when they arrived in Hollywood. It was a disastrous experience. Numerous projects were suggested by Eisenstein, but they all came to nothing. Two scenarios were completed, *Sutter's Gold*, on the 1948 gold rush, and *An American Tragedy*, based on Theodore Dreiser's great novel indicting capitalist society, but both were rejected. Dreiser campaigned actively at the studio for Eisenstein's scenario, but the heads of Paramount turned deaf ears. Eisenstein's treatment by the Hollywood moguls can best be summed up in a remark attributed to Samuel Goldwyn:

"I've seen your film Potemkin and admire it very much. What I would like is for you to do something of the same kind, but a little cheaper, for Ronald Coleman."(6)

Hollywood Disaster

Eisenstein, Alexandrov, and Tisse left Hollywood in December. In November they had signed a contract with Upton Sinclair, muckraking novelist and "socialist" reformer, who, together with various liberal backers, wanted to underwrite the production of a film about Mexico. Thus began one of the greatest tragedies in motion picture history.

Upon arriving in Mexico, Eisenstein rose to his usual enthusiasm. He was immediately engrossed in the history of Mexico, its scenery, its people, its revolutionary tradition. He was determined to make a film that would show every aspect of Mexico. *Que Viva Mexico* was envisioned by Eisenstein to have six episodes and span a large portion of Mexico's history. It would do for the Mexican people what the body of his work had done for the Soviet people. By the end of 1931, almost 200,000 feet of film had been sent to Hollywood for processing, due to lack of facilities in Mexico.

Throughout his stay in Mexico, Eisenstein had been having increasing difficulties with Sinclair. Never one to put economy ahead of artistic necessity, Eisenstein had been pursuing his usual perfectionist course and had been steadily overrunning Sinclair's budget (a small one to begin with). Sinclair was frothing about it and went so far as to communicate his slanders to Stalin. By January 1932, the differences had reached a peak and Sinclair ordered Eisenstein to stop shooting. Eisenstein planned to return to Hollywood to edit the footage of *Que Viva Mexico* there, but was refused a visa into the United States. In March, he and his companions were finally allowed into the country, but were refused permission to pass through Hollywood. In April, after a farewell banquet in New York, Eisenstein finally was able to see the footage of his Mexican film. Before leaving for Moscow, he reached an agreement with Sinclair that would allow him to edit the film in the Soviet Union. Alexandrov was left behind to see that Sinclair sent on the footage. However, after Alexandrov left for Moscow, Sinclair ordered the footage halted in Hamburg, Germany, and sent back to the United States. The philistine Sinclair thereupon signed a contract with Sol Lesser, producer of Tarzan epics, to have a film made out of Eisenstein's uncut footage. Through all this, the Soviet film agency made no effort to have the product of one of its greatest artists returned to the Soviet Union. Lesser made the feature *Thunder Out of Mexico*, which premiered in March 1933, and two shorts, *Death Day*and *Eisenstein in Mexico*. These films are totally alien to Eisenstein's conception. They retain none of the panoramic scope of the Mexican history and culture that was present in his original plan. They are edited in conventional story form and are memorable only for the stunning camera work. But, of course, Eisenstein's films are much more than beautifully composed frames.

Later, Eisenstein's biographer and friend Marie Seton made her own version, *Que Viva Mexico*, an honest but inadequate attempt to reconstruct the film from the director's scenario. But there was no substitute for Eisenstein's own post-production work, which was where his films really took form. Other footage was sold by Sinclair to firms such as Bell & Howell and Encyclopedia Britannica Films. To this day, Eisenstein's footage still emerges in various travelogues and educational films.

Return to Moscow

Eisenstein never recovered from his Mexican experience. It obsessed him and sometimes, in moments of stress, he would speak of getting his Mexican footage and editing it. The worst blow was finally seeing the butchered film in 1947, a year before his death and at the height of his censure by the Stalinist bureaucracy. After returning to the Soviet Union in 1933 he retreated to the Caucasus in extreme depression. He led a reclusive life, devoting himself to his theoretical work, and eventually decided to return to Moscow to teach at the Film Institute. Along with his teaching, he also continued projects that had long held his attention. Among these was a never-to-be-made film on the life of Toussaint l'Ouverture, the Haitian revolutionary, with the role conceived for Paul Robeson, the Black American actor, who was in Moscow at the time. He also worked on plans for his long-cherished idea to make Marx's *Capital* into a film. He envisioned it as a film about dialectical materialism. The bureaucracy scoffed at the idea and the film was never made.

However, Eisenstein had returned to a Moscow that had changed since his trip to America. The Left Opposition had been exiled, imprisoned, or killed. Any opposition to the bureaucracy in the party had been stifled. The bureaucracy had declared war upon dialectical materialism, and this could be seen not only in the realm of politics but also in the sciences and arts. Stalin's Comintern had betrayed the German working class, and the debacle of the "third period" was now being transformed into the "policy" of the popular front. In order to carry through the alliance with the bourgeoisie internationally, the Moscow Trials and GPU assassinations were necessary. Eisenstein returned to an atmosphere of preparation for purges. Thought was calcified. Artists were attacked for "formalism"; "socialist realism" was the bureaucracy's aesthetic. This was the opposite of the artistic golden age after the Bolshevik Revolution. Art was now to be the clarion and apologist for the bureaucracy.

Eisenstein immediately came under attack for his "formalism" in*Potemkin* and *October*. The offensive came from old friends, filmmakers he had generously helped in their early careers. For the six days of the All Union Conference of Cinematographic Workers, Eisenstein was roundly attacked by his colleagues. Only one filmmaker, the pioneer director Kuleshov, came to his defense. At the awards ceremony held at the Bolshoi Theater to commemorate the fifteenth anniversary of Soviet cinema, at which Eisenstein presided, he was passed over for the major decorations and given the most minor prize.

The pressure of the bureaucracy on every revolutionary, intellectual, and artist was tremendous. Under this pressure, Eisenstein, who had long carried on a fight against the conventions of plot and story and for the collective as opposed to the individual hero, was to write in 1934:

"Stretching out its hand to the new quality of literature—the dramatics of

subject—the cinema cannot forget the tremendous experience of its earlier periods. But the way is not back to them, but forward to the synthesis of all the best that has been done by our silent cinematography, towards a synthesis of these with the demands of today, along the lines of story and Marxist-Leninist ideological analysis. The phase of monumental synthesis in the images of the people of the epoch of socialism—the phase of socialist realism."(7)

And, in 1935, in a further concession to the new "aesthetics":

"From the former all-pervading mass imagery of movement and experience of the masses, there begin at this stage to stand out individual heroic characters. Their appearance is accompanied by a structural change in those works where they appear. The former epical quality and its characteristic giant scale begin to contract into constructions closer to dramaturgy in the narrow sense of the word, to a dramaturgy, in fact, of more traditional stamp...

"It is not accidental that precisely at this period, for the first time in our cinematography, there begin to appear the first finished images of personalities, not just of any personalities, but of the finest personalities: the leading figures of leading Communists and Bolsheviks."(8)

Eisenstein made every attempt to conform outwardly, but his early history and past practice could not be easily shaken off.

Denounced by Bureaucracy

In the middle of 1935, he began work on his first film in over three years, *Bezhin Meadow*. It was commissioned by the Communist Youth League to commemorate the contribution of the Young Pioneers to collective farm work. Its story was of the martyrdom of a young peasant, a member of the Young Pioneers, in a successful fight against sabotage by the village's kulaks, led by his own father. By the end of the year, however, Eisenstein was stricken by smallpox. This was followed, in 1936, by an attack of influenza. He was unable to return to the film, which was 60 percent shot, but continued work on the scenario with the great Soviet writer, Isaac Babel.

The bureaucracy failed to be impressed. The new head of Soviet film production, Boris Shumyatsky, published a vicious denunciation, "The Errors of *Bezhin Meadow*," and ordered production stopped.

In his statement, published in Pravda in March 1937, Shumyatsky, who had criticized Soviet films for lacking romantic interest and who was himself to be removed only eight months later, accused Eisenstein of "making *Bezhin Meadow* only because it offered him an opportunity to indulge in formalistic exercises. Instead of creating a strong, clear, direct work, Eisenstein detached his work from reality, from the colors and heroism of reality. He consciously reduced the work's ideological content."(9)

Eisenstein replied soon after with a published self-denunciation in which he pledged to "rid myself of the last anarchistic traits of individualism in my outlook and creative method."(10) Nevertheless, the filming of *Bezhin Meadow* was not resumed and the footage completely disappeared.

The Moscow Trials were beginning. Along with the murders of the allies of Lenin and Trotsky went the destruction of an entire generation of artists and writers who reached their creative peaks during the first period of the revolution. Meyerhold, Babel, and Tretyakov, old colleagues of Eisenstein, perished at the hands of Stalin's police. Of all the arts, only the major figures in film survived the Stalinist terror. This was not, as one biographer of Eisenstein has conjectured, because Stalin had a special weakness for films.(11) More than in any other part of the cultural sphere in the Soviet Union, filmmakers were well-known international figures, most notably Eisenstein. Eisenstein had been to every major city in the world, where he had been wined and dined by intellectuals and artists. He was an intimate friend of Chaplin and Robeson, among many. To have come down on an Eisenstein or a Pudovkin would have alienated those liberals throughout the world without whose support the Stalinist purges would not have been possible. So Eisenstein and his colleagues were pushed down a very narrow creative path.

In 1937, with Germany threatening hostilities against the Soviet Union, Eisenstein was given a very important task. He was to make a film that would arouse the patriotic spirit of every Russian against the German danger as well as serve a warning to the Germans that war against the Soviet Union would be fatal. To do this he would reach back to the thirteenth century for the saga of Prince Alexander Nevsky, who raised up an army from the Russian peasantry to beat back the barbaric Teutonic knights. The film *Alexander Nevsky* was completed in 1938 and earned Eisenstein the Order of Lenin as well as the title of Doctor of the Science of Art Studies. It is a very impressive film, his first in sound, with a marvelous score by Sergei Prokofiev that became famous in its own right. The costumes and settings are magnificent. The Teutonic knights are outfitted in nightmarish helmets. the climactic scene is the famous "Battle on the Ice," where the enemy sinks through the cracking ice of Lake Pleschayev and, from the weight of their armor, beneath the water.

Tremendous theoretical work went into the preparation and execution of *Alexander Nevsky*, as is evident from Eisenstein's writings at this time. These writings stress the unity and conflict of the two opposites, sound and picture. The structure of each frame and sequence is broken down and examined in terms of the conflict within them. But such an impressive film and body of theory could not hide the fact that Eisenstein had made a film that ten years before he might have walked out on. For all its cinematic strengths, *Alexander Nevsky* is a patriotic pageant that speaks of the "Russian people" rather than "classes." To make this chauvinistic epic it was necessary for Eisenstein to jettison "Collision" and go over completely to "Linkage." Montage is thrown out and we are left with a superb Hollywood-type rendering of a national hero, complete with (the first time for Eisenstein) a cast of big-name Russian stars.

Alexander Nevsky was an immediate success and, except for the years when it was shelved during the Stalin-Hitler pact, was a constant prop of chauvinist propaganda throughout the war. Eisenstein then set to work on various projects, but shooting was stopped with the opening of World War II. In 1941, after being evacuated from Moscow to Alma Ata with other filmmakers in the face of Hitler's advancing armies, he started work on the scenario of Ivan the Terrible.

Indictment of Stalinism

The new film was projected as a three-part historical spectacle about the Russian tsar who unified the country into one nation in the 16th century. To do this, Ivan the Terrible resorted to the most ruthless measures to destroy the rule of the boyar nobility over their fiefdoms, thus earning himself his name. The film was to be another epic about a great national hero, placing him in the most favorable light. Again with the talents of the composer Prokofiev and the actor Nikolai Cherkassov (who had played Nevsky), Eisenstein commenced shooting in 1942. Every facility was placed at his disposal. In 1945,*Ivan the Terrible, Part One* had its first showing. In 1946, it won the Stalin Prize, first class, for Eisenstein, Cherkassov, Prokofiev, and others who worked on the film. *Part One* goes further than Alexander Nevsky in its confident use of spectacle. In its form and mood it is like opera. The costumes, settings, photography, and use of music outdistance anything done in film before then. Ivan is a tragic figure in *Part One*, torn between his humanity and the ruthless

things he is forced to do.

In 1946, *Ivan the Terrible, Part Two* was completed. It had the same cast and production crew as *Part One* and continued the story of Ivan's fight for Russian nationhood. In *Part Two*, however, the character of Ivan has undergone a major change. In his struggle against the boyars, Ivan's measures clearly get out of hand. He becomes paranoid, and in carrying out his dark deeds against the boyars relies increasingly on his hand-picked band of fanatic young security guards, the oprichniki. The film is an obvious indictment of Stalin and the GPU.

In February 1946, Eisenstein was stricken with a heart attack at a dinner celebrating the completion of the editing of *Part Two*. On September 4, the Central Committee of the Communist Party passed a resolution on cinema and theater that condemned *Ivan the Terrible, Part Two*. It said, in part:

"In the second part of the film *Ivan the Terrible*, the director Eisenstein displayed his ignorance of historic fact by showing Ivan the Terrible's progressive army of oprichniks as a band of degenerates in the style of the American Ku-Klux-Klan; and Ivan the Terrible, a man of great will power and strong character, as a weak and feeble being, a sort of Hamlet."(12)

Eisenstein defended the film in a cultural journal in October, but the film was banned. It did not premiere in the Soviet Union until 1958 (five years after Stalin's death), in the United States until 1959.

Nikolai Cherkassov, who played Ivan, wrote in his 1953 memoirs of the "unforgettable meeting" that he and Eisenstein had with Stalin in the Kremlin on February 24, 1947, to discuss *Part Two*:

"In reply to our questions, Comrade J. V. Stalin made a whole series of extraordinarily valuable and interesting remarks about the era of Ivan the Terrible and the principles of the artistic representation of historical figures. "These figures," he emphasized, "must be shown with truth and forcefulness, and it is essential to preserve the style of the historical period." A number of problems concerning the Soviet cinema were discussed during the conversation, and we were able once again to appreciate the vigilant attention with which Josef Vissarionovich had considered the problems of the cinematic art.

"We mentioned the question of the time it would take to complete our film. J. V. said that in this field excessive haste was useless, and the essential thing was to make a film in the style of the period, one which conformed to historic truth. Only flawless films, he said, should be released. Our spectators had grown up, they had become more demanding and we should only show them works of art of the highest quality."(13)

So, with Stalin's approval, the film would be revised. This, of course, meant reshooting and reediting a good deal of *Part Two*. It was a matter of virtually remaking the film, and Eisenstein's health prohibited such an undertaking. The total ban on *Ivan the Terrible, Part Two* remained. Nevertheless, Eisenstein worked on the scenario for *Part Three* (little of which was shot) and immersed himself in new projects and theoretical work. At the time of his death in 1948, he was at work on two books of film theory. An unfinished manuscript on color cinematography was on the desk at which he died.

Eisenstein was in continuous conflict with the Stalinist bureaucracy. Probably as a matter of physical survival as well as the ability to still work in films, he took on the coloration of the prevailing aesthetics and yielded on many points. It would seem that he had made his peace with the bureaucracy. But there is much we do not know, since the voluminous Eisenstein archives are kept under guard in Moscow; biographers and historians have continually been refused access to them. These journals, letters, and other personal papers might throw light on his relationship with Stalin and on the course that led him to his courageous offensive against the bureaucracy in *Ivan the Terrible, Part Two*.

The trend among his biographers has been to picture Eisenstein as a tragic figure torn by an enormous internal conflict: the artist vs. the Marxist. But, as the history of the arts in the early days of the Russian Revolution demonstrated, this was not a conflict. The conquest of power led by the Bolshevik Party unleashed a cultural renaissance, the high point of which was the works of Sergei Eisenstein.

Notes

1. Martin Mailer, "Success and Failure of the Soviet Cinema,"*Marxist*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1967, p. 4. [back]

2. Luda and Jean Schnitzer and Marcel Martin, editors, *Cinema in Revolution*, Hill and Wang, 1973, p. 13. [back]

3. Yon Barna, *Eisenstein*, Little, Brown, 1973, p. 62. [back]

4. Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form*, Meridian Books, 1957, p. 37. [back]

5. Barna. p. 123. [back]

6. Leon Moussinac, *Sergei Eisenstein*, Crown Publishers, 1970, p. 167. [back]

7. *Eisenstein*, p. 17. [back]

8. Ibid., pp. 123-124. [back]

9. Moussinac, p. 158. [back]

10. Ibid., p, 164. [back]

11. Barna, p. 199. [back]

12. Sergei Eisenstein, *Ivan the Terrible*, Classic Film Scripts, Simon and Schuster, p. 12. [back]

13. Ibid., p. 21. [back]