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## Western Cinematography on the Pages of the *Soviet Screen* Magazine: 1928–1930

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### Abstract

Despite the sharp power struggle that continued throughout 1928–1930 in the top Power of the USSR (this time the so-called “right deviation” in the Communist party was being liquidated), the situation in the cinema and in the press became the subject of close attention. Former “formalistic” liberties and relative creative freedom gradually began to disappear under the pressure of ideological censorship. In particular, cinema, film distribution and the press became the field of the communist struggle against bourgeois propaganda, entertainment, formalism. And here, a severe ideological and administrative blow was dealt to the *Teakinopechat* publishing house, headed by V. Uspensky (1880–1929), who in the second half of 1928 – early 1929 was also the editor of the *Soviet Screen*. A number of meetings were also held to strengthen control over the cinema and the press.

All these events could not but affect the overall situation in *Soviet Screen*: its pages from 1925 to 1930 saw a gradual and consistent decrease in the number of articles about Western cinema, which eventually led to an almost tenfold decrease in this kind of texts in 1930 relative to 1925. The reasons for this decline in the volume of magazine articles on Western cinema are mainly related to the ideological and administrative struggle of the Soviets against Western influence in all spheres of culture, which intensified sharply by the end of the 1920s.

Based on the content analysis of texts published in the *Soviet Screen* magazine from 1928 to 1930, this article highlights the following main genres and trends within the framework of topics related to Western cinema:

- articles sharply criticizing the policy in the field of distribution of foreign films in USSR and the harmful influence of Western cinema on Soviet viewers;
- biographies and creative portraits of Western actors and directors, which were already published in much smaller volumes compared to the period of 1925–1927 and were more ideologized;
- reviews of Western films (also kept to a minimum and with a greater critical focus);
- reviews of Western national cinematographies, which on the whole give a very negative assessment of the film process in leading Western countries;
- articles about Western newsreels, where criticism of the bourgeois system and cinema in general was also intensified;
- articles about foreign film technology, studios and cinemas (perhaps the only section of the magazine that still retained an ideologically neutral presentation of facts and calls to adopt foreign technical experience, for example, in the field of sound films);

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- short informational materials about events in foreign cinema (which, in contrast to 1925–1927, were already deprived of neutrality and photos of Hollywood stars, but were presented in a feuilleton and revealing manner).

**Keywords:** *Soviet Screen* magazine, Western cinema, film criticism, ideology, politics, reviews, articles.

### 1. Introduction

In this article, we analyze the second stage in the history of the *Soviet Screen* magazine: from 1928 to 1930. It was a period of fairly prompt reaction of the journal to the results of First All-Union Conference of Film and Photo Workers (December 12-17, 1927), First All-Union Party Conference on Cinema (convened by the Central Committee of the Communist Party in March 15-21, 1928 and approved the Resolution “Results of the construction of cinema in the USSR and the tasks of Soviet cinematography”); meeting in the Glavrepertkom to revise the fund of films and clear the screen of “ideologically harmful” films (April 7, 1928), after which foreign topics in the magazine were gradually reduced to a minimum.

Here we take into account that at the end of 1929 the *Soviet Screen* was transformed into *Cinema and Life*, and at the beginning of 1931 it was merged with the *Cinema & Culture* magazine under the name *Proletarian Cinema*, and from that year it began to count *Cinema Art* journal (Fedorov, 2022; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2022; Levitskaya, 2022).

### 2. Materials and methods

The research methodology consists of key philosophical provisions on the connection, interdependence and integrity of the phenomena of reality, the unity of the historical and the social in cognition; scientific, film studies, sociocultural, culturological, hermeneutical, semiotic approaches proposed in the works of leading scientists (Aristarco, 1951; Aronson, 2003; Bakhtin, 1996; Balazs, 1935; Bazin, 1971; Bibler, 1990; Casetti, 1999; Demin, 1966; Eco, 1975; Eco, 1976; Eisenstein, 1964; Fedorov et al., 2017; Fedorov et al., 2018; Fedorov et al., 2019a; Fedorov et al., 2019b; Fedorov, 2002; Fedorov, 2014; Fedorov, 2015a; Fedorov, 2015b; Fedorov, 2016a; Fedorov, 2016b; Fedorov, 2017a; Fedorov, 2017b; Fedorov, 2019; Fedorov, 2021a; Fedorov, 2021b; Fedorov, 2022a; Fedorov, 2022b; Fedorov, 2022c; Fedorov, 2023; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2022a; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2022b; Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2022c; Gledhill, Williams, 2000; Hess, 1997; Hill, Gibson, 1998; Khrenov, 2006; 2011; Kuleshov, 1987; Lotman, 1973; 1992; 1994; Mast, Cohen 1985; Metz, 1974; Razlogov, 1984; Sokolov, 2010; Stam, 2000; Villarejo, 2007 and others).

*Research methods:* complex content analysis, comparative interdisciplinary analysis, methods of theoretical research: classification, comparison, analogy, induction and deduction, abstraction and concretization, theoretical analysis and synthesis, generalization; methods of empirical research: collection of information related to the subject of the project, comparative-historical and hermeneutic methods.

### 3. Discussion and results

In this article, we will focus on the analysis of materials about foreign cinema published in the *Soviet Screen* magazine from 1928 to 1930, when its managing editors were: Nikolai Yakovlev (we, alas, could not find his dates of life either in the archives or in other publications), Vasily Russo (1881–1942), Vyacheslav Uspensky (1880–1929) and Yakov Rudoy (1894–1978).

In [Table 1](#) statistics are presented reflecting the changes (from 1928 to 1930) of the titles of the journal, organizations, the organ of which the journal was, its circulation, periodicity. The names of the editors in charge of the journal and the time periods of their leading work in the publication are indicated.

**Table 1.** *Soviet Screen/Cinema & Life* magazine (1928–1930): statistical data

Year of issue	Magazine title	Publisher	Magazine circulation (in thousands of copies)	Magazine periodicity (issues per year)	Editors the magazine
1928	<i>Soviet</i>	Theater &	60–80	52	Nikolai Yakovlev № 1-17.

	<i>Screen</i>	Cinema Printing			Vasily Russo №№ 18-27. Vyacheslav Uspensky №№ 28-52.
1929	<i>Soviet Screen</i>	Theater & Cinema Printing	25–80	45	Vyacheslav Uspensky №№ 1-15. Jacob Rudoy №№ 16-45.
1930	<i>Cinema and Life</i>	Theater & Cinema Printing, Earth and Factory	45–50	36	Jacob Rudoy №№ 1-36.

Based on the content analysis of the texts published in the *Soviet Screen* magazine in the period from 1928 to 1930, we identified the following main genres:

- articles sharply criticizing the policy in the field of distribution of foreign films and the harmful influence of Western cinema on Soviet viewers;
- biographies and creative portraits of Western actors and directors;
- reviews of Western films;
- reviews of Western national cinematographies;
- articles about Western newsreels;
- articles about foreign film technology, studios and cinemas;
- short informational materials about events in foreign cinema.

*Opinion articles sharply criticizing the foreign film distribution policy and the harmful influence of Western cinema on Soviet viewers*

On First All-Union Conference of Film and Photo Workers (December 12-17, 1927) and in the article of critic, future editor of *Soviet Cinema / Cinema Art* journal Konstantin Yukov (1902–1938) (who was the executive Secretary of the Association of Revolutionary Filmmakers, a member of the Association of Proletarian Writers), published in December 1927 with the eloquent title “The Ideological Center of Burgers” (Yukov, 1927: 71-78), was applied with a significant blow to the Tea-cinema-print publishing house (and, consequently, to the *Soviet Screen* as the product of this publishing house).

The sharp criticism of Tea-cinema-print was continued in during the debate of the Association of Revolutionary Filmmakers on film criticism in February 1928 (V..., 1928: 2), where the Association of Proletarian Writers’ activist, journalist, poet and playwright V. Kirshon (1902–1938) accused the heads of the publishing house (primarily – V. Uspensky) in the trade in ideology”, in propaganda of bourgeois cinema and vulgarity. Specifically about the *Soviet Screen* (of which N. Yakovlev was the editor-in-chief in 1928), Vladimir Kirshon wrote that “this journal is dominated by an ideology hostile to us, dominated by a petty bourgeois who contributes to the petty-bourgeois indoctrination of our Soviet viewers. First of all, absolutely shameless advertising of foreign movie stars (Kirshon, 1928: 144). Similar were the accusations contained in the article of the same V. Kirshon in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* dated February 17, 1928.

Next took place First All-Union Party Conference on Cinema (convened by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in March 15-21, 1928 and approved the Resolution “Results of the construction of cinema in the USSR and the tasks of Soviet cinematography”), where many Soviet publications on cinema were also sharply criticized for promoting foreign films and Hollywood movie stars, for omissions in the field of ideological work.

In response to this, the *Soviet Screen* magazine hastened to publish the “perestroika” editorial appeal “To all readers”: In order to further comprehensively update and improve our journal and satisfy the reader’s requests, we appeal to all our regular and occasional readers with a request to communicate their wishes about the necessary improvements, increase, decrease or change of those or other departments of our journal, as well as wishes for the introduction of new departments. We are convinced that with the help of our readers we will be able to create a film magazine that will fully meet the current needs put forward by an urgent need. Edition (Ko..., 1928).

But the flywheel of criticism, directed, among other things, against the *Soviet Screen*, such appeals could no longer be stopped. After meeting in the Glavrepertkom to revise the fund of films

and clean the screen from “ideologically harmful” films, which took place on April 7, 1928, the executive editor of the *Soviet Screen* Nikolai Yakovlev could no longer stay in his chair, and from May 1 of the same year he was replaced in as temporary managing editor Vasily Russo (1881–1942), who fully justified his temporary status by the fact that he was known more as an artist, sculptor and organizer of the chess and checkers movement in the USSR (he was repressed in 1938, died in a camp in 1942).

V. Russo actively hastened to completely restructure the work of the journal. So it was him, under temporary editorship, that almost the entire number 26 of the *Soviet Screen* (26.06.1928) was devoted to criticism of foreign cinema and foreign film repertoire in the USSR.

Already on the cover of the magazine, readers were met with a photo collage of foreign films and the inscription: “Down with foreign rubbish!”

And at the very beginning of the issue it was strictly stated that the All-Union Party Conference on Film Affairs, the press, and the broad circles of the Soviet public drew attention to the significant clogging of the screens of the USSR with poor-quality film products. Based on this, and also taking into account the increased demands of the worker-peasant audience and the especially important role of cinema in the cultural revolution, the Glavrepertkom began to review all artistic film production, both foreign and Soviet production. First of all, the products of 1925 – 26 and 27 are viewed. The published first list of feature films is compiled by the Glavrepertkom from releases of different years selectively and is subject to immediate removal from the screens of the RSFSR for the following reasons: idealization of the pathological and decadent moods of the decaying bourgeoisie; popularization of hidden prostitution and debauchery; romance of naked trickery and criminality; display of unjustified cruelty and sadism, designed to fray the nerves and unhealthy interest of the philistine audience; preaching bourgeois morality, mysticism, etc. (Naconec..., 1928: 2).

Among the films “subject to immediate removal from the screens of the RSFSR” were the following Western films: *Black Envelope*, *Noble Foreigner*, *House of Hatred*, *Bella Donna*, *Bandida*, *White Moth*, *Priestess Leah*, *The Messenger of the Gods*, *Pietro the Corsair*, *The Ghost*, *The Fatal Letter*, *At Seven P.M.*, *Her Fly's Trademark* (Naconec..., 1928: 2).

The details of the fight against the harmful ideological influence of Western cinema were explained further in the editorial of the *Soviet Screen* under the title “Down!”: Cinema is a sharpened weapon of our class enemy. And here, as on other fronts of our social life, the bourgeoisie does not sleep for a moment and supports a fierce war against us. In order to better achieve the goal, she divided her paintings into two parts: one for her own consumption, the other for the workers. She again divided her own paintings into two groups. The first group is designed to strengthen and develop the basic laws of bourgeois morality, helping them to maintain their dominance. The second group is for entertainment and admiring the presence of their power and strength. Movies for workers, in turn, she also divided into two groups. The first of them she specifically designed to obscure the class consciousness of the workers. To this end, she eloquently and convincingly proves how, through mutual compromises, and more often, by the “noble” acquiescence of the enlightened bourgeois entrepreneur to the ignorant “of course” worker, it is possible to achieve between them a peaceful agreement and amicable, happy cooperation under its own bourgeois rule. The second group, already with the aim of lulling and diverting the attention of the workers from public interests, is a picture of the empty and stupid adventures and adventures of heroes overcoming unnecessary obstacles to anyone with puzzling tricks and manifestations of strength and dexterity. ... We can and must fight against this poisonous movie stuff. Along with the strengthening of domestic production, it is necessary to decisively reduce the import of foreign products, if it is not possible to completely abandon them. We need to concentrate our struggle against foreign junk, which is always harmful to us, always poisonous. We need foreign products to declare an implacable boycott. There should be no agreements here – a merciless war! Down with foreign rubbish! (Doloj, 1928: 3).

What can and should be taken from foreign products was further explained to the readers of the magazine by N. Kaufman, who tried to partially justify the series of publications of the *Soviet Screen* of past years, thereby diverting (at least partially) state criticism from him: Looking back, we can state that among the legion of average film production that flooded our screens, there were films that can be considered milestones in the history of cinematography, because the formal principle that prevailed in them established the canons and thus the foundation of artistic film production. The best examples of American stunt film, with its movement, Griffith and James

Kruse, Chaplin, some French have had a huge impact on the development of the cinematography of our production workers. The art of real cinematic language, genuine cinematic speech is now being born in our country through the efforts of our best directors, – however, in the fact that they immediately established the independence of cinema, its complete isolation from the theater, its own laws in a number of other arts, etc. ... In Western production, the area of comedy and satire is of great interest to us. ... classic American comedies ... – ideologically harmless films – possess, however, the finest cinematic style, in the sense of showing the mechanics of movements and the mechanics of sensations; unfortunately, Western satire always stops halfway, with a magnificently unfinished gesture, as, for example, in René Clair's film *Paris Asleep*. ... Chaplin raises great controversy around his name. Violently rejected by some and extolled by others, it harbors in itself a revolutionary ferment of great power for the Western bourgeoisie. His films, about which the whole world dreams, are a protest against the laws of bourgeois society. For us, it is interesting from a purely formal point of view, because its romantic irony stands far behind the pathos of our revolutionary themes (Kaufman, 1928: 4).

However, along with such a “lawyer’s” passage, N. Kaufman hastened to emphasize that, on the whole, the magazine agrees with the sharp criticism of the policy of distributing foreign films in the USSR: exert a sinister influence on the consciousness and taste of our layman and even the worker-peasant spectator. Aligning with the greatest care the ideological line of our Soviet picture, we completely thoughtlessly allowed the cultivation of tabloid romance, massacre on the screens ... In the field of Western film drama, individual grandiose things cannot atone for the ideological unacceptability of most films in which bourgeois-individualist or anarchist morality prevails (Kaufman, 1928: 4).

In the same issue, the actor and director V. Zhemchuzhny (1898–1966) proposed a method for showing foreign films: What should we do with this average, standard film of German-French-American production, which has been safely walking on our screens for many years? After all, paintings of this type are codes of high-and-petty-bourgeois morality. Mass self-instruction manuals of everyday behavior. ... How to stop this frank, open mass propaganda of an ideology hostile to us, if, as before, the average foreign film will be imported to us? The answer is clear: you need to neutralize, disinfect this film before it is released. ... It is necessary to force the viewer to take the material of foreign films lightly. It needs to be parodied. Irony is the best immunity from ideological contagion. ... One should not be afraid to emphasize the ironic attitude to the material in all average foreign films in distribution by inscriptions and remounting (Zhemchuzhny, 1928: 5).

As a result, after the release of issue 26 for 1928, photos of foreign stars practically disappeared from the covers of the *Soviet Screen*, now portraits of Soviet actors and actresses and their characters were placed on the photo covers from issue to issue (often next to a tractor, machine tool and other production tools).

The line of “correcting ideological miscalculations” was continued in the journal by the head of the *Teakinopechat* (*Tea-Cinema-Print*) V. Uspensky (1880–1929), who again headed the *Soviet Screen* from July 1928 (from No. 28).

However, even the minimization of foreign topics in the *Soviet Screen* in 1928 did not save the magazine and its editor from continued sharp criticism: on February 19, 1929, an article was published in *Izvestia* under the ominous title “*Teakinopechat* publishing house sells ideology” (Tea..., 1929: 4).

In this editorial, the attitude towards the activities of *Teakinopechat* and V. Uspensky personally was extremely negative: As early as the 1927 meeting spoke of the exceptional weakness of books on theater and cinema, the ideological intemperance of criticism, and the dependence of critical evaluations on the policies of competing theater enterprises. However, unscrupulous “merchants” who work both in magazines and in the publishing house have turned the main theater and film magazines *Modern Theater* and *Soviet Screen* into advertising publications aimed at increasing the income of the publishing house. It has been established that these magazines not only published portraits and photographs of actors for a special fee, but also sold editorial material – whole pages – to individual organizations and individuals, copying the commercial methods of the bourgeois press. ... *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, pointing out that the activities of the *Teakinopechat* publishing house are ideological sabotage, discrediting our press and our line in matters of art in the eyes of the mass reader and film workers, asks if it is not time to head the publishing house that has monopolized literature on theater and cinema, to imprison seasoned communists instead of ideology dealers? (Tea..., 1929: 4).

In March 1929, a public trial took place over Uspensky, initiated by the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate and a collegium of workers' assessors. In connection with articles that appeared in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* accusing the board of *Teakinopechat* of "dealing in ideology", selling articles on individual films and cinema organizations, and receiving money for them as for advertising, the united bureau of complaints of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorat together with a collegium of working assessors examined this accusation and confirmed its existence" (Delo..., 1929: 11). As a result, the meeting of working assessors decided to dismiss a number of senior employees of *Teakinopechat* (including the recent temporary editor of *Soviet Screen*, V. Russo). Also on the agenda was the question of expelling V. Uspensky from the ranks of the Communist Party.

Newspaper materials were immediately published about this public trial, approving punitive measures against the *Teakinopechat* (Deley..., 1929: 4).

Unable to withstand these accusations and harassment, V. Uspensky committed suicide on March 28, 1929.

In his letter (dated March 30, 1929) A. Lunacharsky wrote that V. Uspensky did not find the strength to fight further against the vile persecution, the victim of which he fell (Lunacharsky, 1929). Apparently, the causes of V. Uspensky's death and the level of official reaction to it were discussed for a long time at the "very top", therefore, obituaries appeared in the professional press very late (April 7-16), already after the sympathetic material in *Pravda* (Cinema, 1929: 1; Minkin, 1929: 3; Rokotov et al., 1929: 3). In the *Soviet Screen* itself, the obituary was published only on April 16, 1929 (No. 16).

From April No. 16, 1929, the *Soviet Screen* magazine was headed by the historian and journalist Yakov Rudoy (1894–1978), under which in 1930 it was renamed *Screen & Life*. Under the editorship of Y. Rudy, less and less was written about foreign cinema in the *Soviet Screen*, and if they did, it was mostly a negative assessment of the so-called "bourgeois cinema".

Soon after the appointment of Y. Rudy to the post of editor-in-chief of the *Soviet Screen*, an editorial was published on its pages, where the "party" self-criticism of the publication was combined with a kind of program to correct shortcomings: *Soviet Screen* is a magazine of its own type. Until now, its pages have combined coverage of topical and acute issues of Soviet cinematography with purely "entertaining" material, which was not always ideologically consistent and of good quality. ... And finally, in practice, the magazine often served as a place for advertising various "movie stars", both of Soviet and foreign origin. ... As a result, without the correct ideological and literary orientation, the *Soviet Screen* did not have a definite literary face and often slipped into the service of a tradesman who was looking for pure entertainment, spicy piquancy, etc. in literature, theater and cinema. All these troubles of the journal stemmed from the eclecticism of its attitude, the monstrous hodgepodge of reader groups and their demands, which he tried to satisfy. It's time to finally put a cross on it. The situation on the ideological front and the unfolding of the cultural revolution demand from us a clear class line, a correct literary attitude, and not indulging the petty-bourgeois tastes of the layman. ... Accordingly, it is necessary to cover Soviet and foreign production in such a way that it helps the viewer to understand the social, class and artistic aspects ... The magazine here can be a consultant and ideological assistant to the working viewer. ... We must acquaint the reader with the technical achievements of capitalist cinematography, and [expose the rotten ideology]. ... Expelling bohemian customs, the slightest hint of yellowness, the journal must beware of the danger of becoming dry, protocol, stereotyped (Soviet..., 1929: 3).

In connection with the campaign to overcome the above drawbacks of the magazine, a questionnaire survey of the *Soviet Screen* readers was conducted: it was supposed that the results of such a survey would help the editors to identify the face of their readers. The answers to the questionnaire would reflect the reader's cultural level and clearly indicate his or her interests. At our staff meetings there are heated debates about proposed measures to improve the magazine and develop its program. The results of the survey will help our editors to grasp the main demands of the readership and, thanks to that, to find the right setting for the magazine. ... Readers must answer our questions with all the seriousness of people interested in the successful development of our cinema (Smotr..., 1929: 4).

In the period 1929–1930, the editors of the *Soviet Screen* magazine emphasized their irreconcilable class positions from issue to issue: Bourgeois tastes, bourgeois consciousness have ... their roots, although drying up, but still connected with some kind of soil ... Therefore, any attempt

to lubricate the sharpness of the struggle against hostile influences in art and, in particular, in cinema is highly frivolous and dangerous. A great and naive simplification should be considered the restriction of class vigilance in relation to bourgeois attacks in art only within the framework of themes and mechanical regulation (O..., 1929: 3).

Of course, the magazine sometimes had to admit that the purely material riches of Western cinema are superior to ours". But on the other hand, it was emphasized that "a whole series of organizational vices sometimes reduces these advantages to artistic zero. ... If we now move from technology to ideology, then everything seems to be clear: who does not know that tasteless philistines and petty bourgeois dictate their tastes to Western cinema, that it is a prisoner of bourgeois "non-principledness", that it has closed its thematic circle with variations, true countless, but variations of a very small number of love, adventure and detective motifs. Our superiority seems undeniable. Traditions of deceitful morality of hypocrisy do not weigh on our cinematography, ... our cinema knows no limits to its thematic searches ... But it seems to us that the matter is not so simple. And we have a lot to learn from Western cinema in the ideological field. What? Firstly, the ability to sensitively catch and perfectly fulfill the social order. Western cinema is bourgeois cinema, but it serves its class with the methods of extraordinarily skillful propaganda, propaganda so flexible, so hidden under innocent unbiasedness, so artistically impressive that we should learn from Western cinema this "ideological technique". ... It can be said that in the field of ideology, we must learn from Western cinema in the same way as we learn from the enemy: to master his techniques, but direct them to the opposite goals. Secondly, Western cinema feels its audience better than ours. Western cinema knows how to please the tradesman. Our cinema often lags behind the demands of the advanced audience (Nashe..., 1929: 7).

Returning to the discussion about foreign films in the Soviet box office, *Soviet Screen* admitted that it is difficult to dispute the need to import foreign film production to us. Our film production is not yet able to satisfy all the needs of the market for motion pictures. Under such conditions, refusing to import foreign films would mean dooming our cinema network to curtailment and, ultimately, paralyzing the production of Soviet films, which need a widely developed cinema network (O..., 1929: 3).

However, the editorial continued, if for many years to come we will be forced to import foreign film production, then a number of very important considerations make us have our own firmly established import policy. ... In fact, chaos and frivolity reign in this area, turning into some kind of system of planting with the help of foreign products of bad petty-bourgeois taste and the most disgusting bourgeois ideas. We are far from accusing anyone of deliberate sabotage. Here the old scourge of Soviet cinematography is at work - narrow businessism and poorly understood interests of commercial gain (O..., 1929: 3).

At the same time, *Soviet Screen* recognized that the foreign market provides some opportunity for selecting healthy, interesting and useful film production. In foreign countries, we find, first of all, a number of brilliant scientific and educational paintings. ... Enriching the viewer's knowledge with useful information, these paintings are at the same time full-blooded works of art and, as such, are an excellent variety of highly entertaining production. In foreign countries, they attract a million-strong audience and make a brilliant "commercial career". ... If we turn to the production of foreign feature films, then here we will find interesting and excellent samples. True, any foreign plot picture is obviously sick for us in an ideological sense. But this means that we have to import only those of them which can at least bring up in our viewer a good artistic taste (O..., 1929: 3).

#### *Biographies and creative portraits of Western actors and directors*

In contrast to the period of 1925–1927, *Soviet Screen* wrote very little about the work of Western filmmakers in 1928–1930.

One of the few exceptions in the general atmosphere of exposing the harmful influence of foreign cinema were articles by director L. Kuleshov (1899–1970) and critic K. Feldman (1887–1967) with a positive characterization of the work of D. Griffith and Ch. Chaplin.

According to L. Kuleshov, Griffith worked either on pure cinema dynamics, or on the pure experience of the sitters, forcing them to convey the psychological state with the most complex movements of his mechanism. ... Chaplin reduced to almost nothing the elementary display of emotions on his face. It demonstrates the behavior of a person in various cases of his life through communication with things, with objects. From their state, the way the hero treats the environment and people changes, his behavior changes (Kuleshov, 1928: 5).

And K. Feldman believed that Chaplin builds comedies, where the development of the characters comes from certain positions in which they find themselves. This situation, first of all, should be unexpected: hence the sure effect of irresistible laughter. ... Using these formal methods, Chaplin managed to create socio-psychological images that were brilliant in their depth. ... Chaplin shows us the whole picture of the social relations of modern society, where among the cops, pastors, owners, manufacturers, fat gentlemen wanders offended by this world, forever hungry, homeless Chaplin's "Man" – a runaway convict, a tramp, a proletarian, a circus performer, etc. He should be sorry. Satire is replaced by irony, with the help of which Chaplin raises his comedy to tragic heights (Feldman, 1928: 7).

The *Soviet Screen* (Mogilevsky, 1929: 6) also wrote quite positively about the documentary filmmaker Joris Ivens (1898-1989).

But A. Lunacharsky (1875-1933) in relation to the work of the famous German director F. Murnau (1889-1931) expressed an ambiguous position: "The worst and least cultured part of the European philistinism is extremely illegible both in terms of ideological and artistic form. But the same cannot be said of the upper stratum of philistinism. True, she, too, not without pleasure swallows the usual stencil film food, but she immediately responds, and sometimes arranges a big success when she meets a film to her liking. ... When you have such a director as Murnau, with his amazing depth of capture, with his elegant external simplicity and powerful ability to suddenly spin you around in a whole whirlwind of deftly moved masses of people and objects, then you say to yourself – what could such an exceptional talent do if he got a really big one in his hands, an exciting topic, one of those human themes that, shocking, can not only help digestion or a sweet dream after shedding a delicious tear, but move forward those who have become infected with its pathos!" (Lunacharsky, 1928: 4).

#### *Western film reviews*

There were just as few reviews of Western films in the *Soviet Screen* magazine of 1928–1930 as there were creative portraits of foreign filmmakers.

In particular, the writer L. Nikulin (1891-1967) reflected quite positively on some foreign films on the pages of the magazine: Let me tell you about several excellent films that I saw. In the first place, you can put the work of ... American director Niblo ... *The Temptress* (*La Tentatrice*, 1926). ... Cinematography couldn't get past the World War. It is relatively reflected in two wonderful films – *The Big Parade* and *In the Service of Glory*. They are remarkable because, despite all the efforts of the masters, they came out as anti-militarist tragedies, and not spectacular battle extravaganzas (Nikulin, 1928: 12-13).

Screenwriter N. Ravich (1899-1976), at first quite rightly scolded Sovkino for the fact that it preferred to import a lot of completely insignificant foreign films, refusing to import such masterpieces as Chaplin's *Gold Rush* and *Circus*, noted further that such, for example, interesting films *Chicago*, *Chang* and *Moulin Rouge* came out in the Soviet film distribution. *Chicago* is a peculiar film, if only because if we wanted to ridicule the life of capitalist America, then, perhaps, we would not be able to do it with such brilliance, with such scourging satirical poignancy, with which it is done in *Chicago*. ... *Chang* is what is called a cultural film. ... Never before has a movie camera penetrated so deeply into the primitive world of man and animal (Ravich, 1929: 14).

However, the critic H. Khersonsky (1897-1968) reacted to *Chicago* based on much more "class-correct" positions. He began by reminding readers that bourgeois cinema does not at all show the "reverse" ... side of American capitalism. The life and work of the workers and their relationship with the "masters", the class struggle – were carefully hidden in American cinema and hung with a pink veil. The cinema of America did not reveal the whole inner life of its country, did not give its social analysis and true illumination. ... Griffith and many others like him lie, tell naive tales, propagate (Khersonsky, 1929: 8).

Turning to *Chicago*, Khersonsky wrote that this film, exposing modern America, cuts wide layers of bourgeois society with a knife of satire: the family, the venality of "law", the hypocrisy and emptiness of the court, the pursuit of the press and the crowd for savoring a vulgar sensation ... Urson's film grows into a vivid generalization for the whole of America, ridicules and caustically castigates the entire bourgeois society. How did it happen? Why such a revolution? No, there is no revolutionism yet! The film *Chicago* says only that the development of "civilization", so "flourishing" on the soil of growing American capitalism, has already reached such a stage that the phenomena characteristic of this new civilization are beginning to meet some opposition from the most established and conservative part of the bourgeoisie. ... The authors of the film *Chicago*

acutely see life behind and around them only in their bourgeois society, but they do not take into account the class struggle at all, their social analysis is therefore very superficial, and they cannot see anything ahead. The film, with all its visual acuity – but essentially narrow-minded, blind – is “salon” (Khersonsky, 1929: 8).

Even director V. Meyerhold (1874–1940) expressed his opinion about Western cinema in 1928. French production, with the exception of the work of Abel Gance and a few innovators, disappointed him. In Hollywood films, V. Meyerhold was struck by their ideological side: people who exploit are given as negative characters, and those who are exploited are positive”. Further, V. Meyerhold noted that the film *Joan of Arc (La passion de Jeanne d'Arc, 1928)* had a great success in Paris: “This film was made excellently, unlike almost all modern French productions. Interestingly, the trial of *Joan of Arc* was filed in terms of an evil mockery of religion and representatives of the church. The whole picture was shot on the same close-ups, on the same facial expressions of the actors. *Joan of Arc* is a great innovation. They don't shoot like that either in the West or in our country (Meyerhold, 1928: 14).

The *Soviet Screen* responded very negatively about the film *Cagliostro: Cagliostro* is a typical example of a pompous pseudo-historical film ... There was Casanova – now Cagliostro. There is almost no difference (Kriki..., 1929: 15).

Approximately the same assessment was given to the sound film *The Singing Fool* (1928) on the pages of the magazine: The synchronization of sound and movement in the film is perfect, but ... there are no sound influxes or double exposures... The editing is also the most primitive – operatic. The result was not a movie, but a potpourri of trendy songs and motifs forcibly squeezed into a stereotyped plot (Erofeev, 1929: 11).

#### *Reviews of Western national cinematographies*

The position of the *Soviet Screen* magazine of 1928-1930 regarding mass Western film production was mostly negative (Attasheva, 1928: 10; Attasheva, 1929: 14; Elvin, 1928: 5; Fefer, 1929: 10; Gervinus, 1928; 1929; Glebov, 1928: 7; Kaufman, 1929: 10; Koltsova, 1928: 10; Shutko, 1928: 4; Tees, 1929: 3; Zilpert, 1928, etc.).

For example, continuing her series of articles on American cinema, P. Attasheva (1900–1965), in her note with the indicative title “SOS from Hollywood,” wrote that the decline of the creative forces of American cinematography is not the fruit of an invention of competing Europe, but a fact ... Quality production is drastically reduced. Even buying up all the sensational literary novelties of Europe does not help to resolve the damned scenario issue. Talking cinema inspired tireless “money makers” with its appearance. Countless operettas and plays, lavishly stocked with mystical horrors, gangsters and murders, flood the screens of America with a muddy stream of cheap and unkempt sensation. The films of the last issue, in their bulk, easily fit into the following five headings: light comedies, often of a rather dubious nature, exotica with all kinds of nudity, cabaret films, also with all kinds of nudity, and finally, a kind of “guignol” – sound films with murder, ghosts, screams, groans and spiritistic séances (Attasheva, 1929: 14).

At the same time, the same P. Attasheva noted, “talking and sounding cinema is, for America, already a fait accompli. ... A discovery capable of giving humanity a powerful new means of artistic culture is used by the Americans in most cases to stage operetta *Songs of Love, The Desert Songs*, etc. tasks (Attasheva, 1928: 6).

S. Glebov also presented the Hollywood topic in a negative way to the readers of the *Soviet Screen*: There are only a couple of dozen movie stars in Hollywood. There are 20,000 extras. With a few exceptions, they all drag out a miserable beggarly existence. All day long, they stand by the hundreds at the gates of countless studios in the hope of getting a job in crowd scenes. But the supply is many times greater than the demand, and only a few find work. ... The scriptwriters only vary the old hackneyed theme: the strong, but moral love of the characters meets a number of obstacles on its way from the scoundrels and intriguers, but in the last part everything ends as happily as possible. If poor people are shown in films, they are always submissive and well-behaved, for which they are rewarded at the end of the picture with unexpected wealth – a symbol of happiness. The content of Hollywood films does not reflect real life, but is always cloyingly sugary and, most importantly, typified. ... Not here, not in the conditions of the capitalist system, can genuine art arise! (Glebov, 1928: 7).

A similar point of view was expressed by the director V. Nemirovich-Danchenko (1858–1943): “Advertising and speculation in talents are the pulse of the life of cinema-America. The ugly staging of *Anna Karenina* was released under the title *Love*. ... America is experiencing an

unusually acute scenario crisis. Everything that is possible and impossible is remade for the screen” (Nemirovich-Danchenko, 1928: 10).

In addition, *Soviet Screen* emphasized that in the West cinematography is being armed against the USSR, that abroad there have never been so many militaristic films in production and distribution. ... One listing of these countries ... already reveals the political goals of the war film: the preparation of an attack on the USSR. Here one can observe the “international” solidarity of the bourgeois governments. American, English and French movies (Kak..., 1929: 14).

The pages of the magazine noted that a huge number of military, militaristic films are now being shown on the screens of Western American countries (Fefer, 1929: 9). At the same time, patriotic war films (no need to hide this) enjoy a certain, stable success among bourgeois viewers. ... the most common can be considered those films where the war is taken only as a background for the deployment of a dramatic or comedic intrigue. Poison, sprinkled not with horse doses, but gradually. The poison is hardly noticeable and therefore the most dangerous. ... And the film systematically produced by the bourgeoisie, which arouses the patriotism of foreign philistines, we must oppose the same systematic neutralization of pictures that often seem harmless, and, to be honest, even penetrate our screens (Fefer, 1929: 10).

He continued the *Soviet Screen* and his favorite theme of ridiculing Western films on the Russian topic.

E. Koltsova (1901–1964) wrote that Americans movies, taking into account the requirements of the viewer, are currently throwing various exotic works on Russian themes onto the market in whole bundles, already counting profits and savings from these new components of Hollywood art in advance: *Michael Strogoff*, *Sunday*, *Love*, *Hurricane*, *Cossacks*, *In the Vise* and, finally, *The Path to Glory* or *The General*. ... Living ghostly shadows of emigrants wander in Hollywood hospitable studios, receive money, play to the full anguish and resurrect the past days of their struggle for their beloved homeland, stunning with naked horror (Koltsova, 1928: 10).

The journalist, who hid under the pseudonym Gervinus, completely agreed with her: The scriptwriters of the cinematic West are diligently chasing the “topic of the day”, a one-day sensation, what is written in the evening edition of the tabloid newspaper, which interests the layman today. ... And now the Americans are growing in Hollywood spreading cranberries with the Volga barge haulers and grand dukes in an opera-sham “Russian” film. The French prefer “Russian atrocities” in the style of Breshko-Breshkovsky, except without fried babies (Gervinus, 1928: 14), and films devoted to various eras of Russian history continue to pour like from a cornucopia. ... Cinematography of the West ... modestly speaking, “allows itself to be stupid”. Until recently, this was most often abused by French cinema. Especially when the film depicts Russian life. Nowadays the world record in the cultivation of the cranberry must be held by Italy (Gervinus, 1929: 14).

The magazine was also far from praising French cinema, asserting that French cinematography has been brought to a dead end (Fefer, 1929: 12). For example, a group of the left avant-garde ... made a heroic attempt to revive this dead swamp. Unable to overcome the inertia of French entrepreneurs, this group of young, talented directors began to work on their own, outside the big factory organisms of the French film industry. ... Forced to do so by circumstances, this group learned to create serious artistic value with the help of small means. She abandoned the pompous historical productions, began to choose her material among the life of a big city, she learned to use accessible urban nature... All this saturated the movies of the left avant-garde with a great sense of modernity and made them close to the viewer of today... However, the directors of the left avant-garde were carried away only by the formal themes of modernity. They discovered a whole range of new formal film techniques, they developed a new theory of light, they found new means of expressing things on the screen. ... However, bare formalism alone will not get you far... in order to get broad, strong support from the working masses of France, the left avant-garde had to resolutely break with naked aestheticism and go towards the demands of the social order of the working spectator. The avant-garde failed to do this (Feldman, 1928: 8).

*Soviet Screen* assessed Polish cinema even more critically: Poland is intensively filmed. ... releases action movie after action movie. Justice forces us to note that these militants look like third-rate French films from among those that are produced by France for the needs of the provinces and bureaucracy bored in the colonies. The standard by which the “young” cinematography of Poland works is salon drama with seductive heroines kissing and crying in close-up, and heroes in tailcoats or artistic blouses with a magnificent bow around their necks”

(Gervinus, 1928: 13). B. Zilpert's next feuilleton about "Polish film-fascist patriots (Zilpert, 1928: 13) also adjoined here.

The *Soviet Screen* did not forget about the struggle against religious influence in cinema, emphasizing, for example, that the French press no longer considers it necessary to hide the fact that its "national" cinematography is closely involved in serving the state and the church. Capitalist, military and religious propaganda is the undisguised goal of the films coming out now. A number of chauvinistic and military paintings. A series of films about "Bolshevik atrocities". And, finally, the open action of the church, which takes over a significant area of production and hire, and becomes the official body of censorship (Den..., 1929).

Journalist B. Zilpert (1891-1938) agreed with this assessment of the situation in Western cinema, talking about similar phenomena in "fascist Italy and no less fascist Poland" and in the Vatican (Zilpert, 1928: 10).

N. Kaumann, in general, stated that a kind of Catholic film international" had formed in the West: "At the Second International Catholic Film Congress, the Munich delegate Dr. Nusser argued that the role of an entertaining film was over, and the viewer of today is turning to an ideological film. ... The governments, mainly of Catholic countries, support the cinematographic activities of Catholics in every possible way ... The Second Catholic Film Congress has tremendous political significance. The environment in which it proceeded and the attitude shown towards it by governments and film organizations indicates that Catholics are gaining solid ground for the implementation of their great-power plans in cinematography. ... However, behind these "angelic" speeches one can sense an iron desire to take control of film production in order to make it a direct mouthpiece for an egregious fascist and clerical ideology (Kaufman, 1929: 10).

However, there was cinematography in the West, to which the *Soviet Screen* had a much more benevolent attitude. So the European correspondent of the magazine claimed that the best of the films I have seen here are German; they are meaningful and not as tendentiously moralistic as the American ones (Romashka, 1929: 14).

And in his article "Ways of Cooperation with the West" journalist and theatrical figure I. Turkeltaub (1890-1938) wrote that "according to the head of one of our Goskino institutions, the Germans, with whom joint work has begun, directly declare: your ideology does not interfere with us; let only the picture be directed by good directors, and let it be profitable (Turkeltaub, 1929: 6).

However, this, of course, did not mean that German cinema always received a positive assessment on the pages of the magazine. It was noted, for example, that the German film industry pays increased attention to the release of films depicting the life and life of the "lower classes". These movies arouse great interest in the broad masses of the Berlin population in terms of their themes. However, all these pictures are specific; directing, sometimes revealing great technical perfection, is primarily concerned with giving the most touching, sentimental and pitiful picture of human misfortune, but without the slightest attempt to reveal the socio-political and economic causes of evil. ... All these movies have in common a careful veiling of elements of the class struggle, class contradictions (Elvin, 1928: 5). Sometimes the German cinematographic youth breaks down and begins to rebel against the oppression of ordinary film vulgarity. The uprising, to tell the truth, is insignificant and very much resembles a storm in a teacup (Neradov, 1929: 12).

Of course, as another *Soviet Screen* article on German cinema stated, the producer of bourgeois cinema sets himself purely entertaining tasks and is most afraid of tiring the viewer's attention by resolving any problems. The post-war bourgeoisie seeks to escape from recent social storms and upheavals into the realm of personal experiences (Panov, 1929: 7).

However, the labor movement still lives, expands and grows", and these workers, of course, cannot be satisfied with the interpretation of the theme of the working class and the social theme in *Metropolis* (1927) by F. Lang (1890-1976):

"Fritz Lang paints conflict between the bourgeoisie and the working class. "Metropolis" – the city of the future – is an image of rationalized capitalist production brought to its logical conclusion. The workers here have become animated appendages of machines. ... The workers are driven into the dungeons; overseers of work turned into policemen; the capitalist is turned into a prince, who owns the life, muscles, body, freedom and thought of the slave workers. But if the boldness of critical thought compels the artist to paint with frankness this bleak picture of a rationalized capitalist society, the next question is where is the way out? – leads him to the most miserable and worn out thoughts. Salvation ... in humility, and therefore in religion. ... The cross

maintains the balance of society. Having once slipped into the realm of false and flat bourgeois hypocrisy, Fritz Lang can no longer resist his final fall (Panov, 1929: 7).

#### *Articles on Western Newsreel*

As in previous years, the *Soviet Screen* sometimes wrote about foreign newsreels and documentaries without much ideological pressure (Kaufman, 1928: 4-5; Tseitlin, 1929: 14). However, he was no longer weary of reminding that the perfectly organized newsreel in America is a powerful instrument of the class struggle in the hands of the American capitalists and the bourgeoisie. The newsreel educates the viewer in the spirit of patriotism, diverting his attention from all the events that, one way or another, may lead him to thoughts that are undesirable for the bourgeoisie (Spiridovsky, 1928: 7). And films in the West are, first of all, a profitable commodity. Kulturfilm is a less profitable commodity, but on the other hand it is a more frank and more organized instrument of bourgeois propaganda (Fefer, 1929: 14; Kaufman, 1929: 12).

#### *Articles about foreign film technology, studios and cinemas*

As in 1925-1927, the topic of Western cinematography was the least ideologized on the pages of the magazine (Anoshchenko, 1930; Garov, 1929; Kaufman, 1928; Shutko, 1928, etc.).

The *Soviet Screen*, for example, unconditionally recognized the primacy of the West in the field of the then technical novelty – sound cinema – and called for the production of sound films in the USSR to be set up as soon as possible: In America, there is a real revolution in the field of cinematography. Sound and word break into the tape. ... We must expect an unprecedented flowering in the field of sound cinema in the coming years. ... The word and sound, having entered the film, should give it a new development (Kaufman, 1928: 12).

In Hollywood, for the year 1928-1929, it is planned to create about 400 sounding films of the most diverse genre: sketches, dances, songs, film stories. ... Eloquent is the seriousness with which American cinematography, after long experiments, is feverishly retooling itself, creating a new kind of entertaining spectacle (Shutko, 1928: 6).

The sound of the film in America made a complete revolution in the acting world, forcing them to reconsider and make a “cleansing” of the entire available cast army. Only those actors and actresses who can “speak” or sing can hope to get a job, the rest are out of order (Garov, 1929: 10-11).

The first television experiments looked just as positive and promising for the *Soviet Screen*: A number of inventors working on the principle of pointwise image transmission (i.e., by decomposing the image into its smallest parts and gradually transmitting it), have achieved successful results. Perhaps the first demonstration of the invention was the transfer of an image of Hoover from New York to Washington.

It was last year. Since that time ... they have managed to greatly reduce the cost of their equipment and adapt it to transmit not only images of objects placed in special conditions ... but also to transmit images directly of events taking place on the street. ... In the future, inventors face the problem of transmitting moving images over a distance (Gervinus, 1929: 12).

#### *Short informational materials about events in foreign cinema*

This thematic block in the *Soviet Screen* of 1925-1927 was the most attractive for the new economic policy’s audience, as it included not only ideologically neutral short notes about the shooting of new Western films and the luxurious life of movie stars, but also offered readers photographs of these same movie stars.

All this completely disappeared from the *Soviet Screen* of 1928-1930.

Of course, there were short notes on Western cinema (Zarubezhnaya..., 1930), but no longer neutral, but sharply criticizing bourgeois cinema, often in a feuilleton style (Gervinus, 1928: 14; Gervinus, 1929; Zilpert, 1928, etc.).

In general, the distribution of texts about Western cinema published in *Soviet Screen* magazine in the 1920s by year, genre, and number of articles is as follows (Table 2):

**Table 2.** Distribution of texts about Western cinematography published in *Soviet Screen* from 1925 to 1930 by genre and number of articles

Year/genre of text	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	Total
Reviews	7	9	7	11	5	0	39
Analytical articles	19	27	19	16	11	3	95
Articles on the history of Western	43	25	29	21	21	3	142

cinema							
Reviews of Western films as part of articles on international film festivals	2	0	0	0	1	0	3
Creative portraits of Western filmmakers	39	36	19	5	4	1	104
Interviews with Western filmmakers	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
Articles about foreign film technology, studios, and cinemas	3	4	5	4	3	4	23
ИТОГО:	116	103	79	57	45	10	410

Analysis of the data in the [Table 2](#) shows that from 1925 to 1930 there was a gradual and consistent decrease in the number of articles about Western cinema in the *Soviet Screen* magazine, which eventually led to an almost tenfold decrease in such texts in 1930 relative to 1925.

The reasons for this decline in the volume of magazine articles on Western cinema are mainly related to the ideological and administrative struggle of the Soviets against Western influence in all spheres of culture, which intensified sharply by the end of the 1920s.

#### 4. Conclusion

So, despite the ongoing struggle for power in the “top” of the USSR throughout 1928–1930 (this time the so-called “right deviation” in the Communist party was being liquidated), the situation in the cinema and in the press became the subject of close attention.

Former “formalistic” liberties and relative creative freedom gradually began to disappear under the pressure of ideological censorship. In particular, cinema, film distribution and the press became the field of the communist struggle against bourgeois propaganda, entertainment, formalism. And here, a severe ideological and administrative blow was dealt to the *Teakinopechat* publishing house, headed by V. Uspensky (1880–1929), who in the second half of 1928 – early 1929 was also the editor of the *Soviet Screen*. A number of meetings were also held.

All these events could not but affect the overall situation in *Soviet Screen*: its pages from 1925 to 1930 saw a gradual and consistent decrease in the number of articles about Western cinema, which eventually led to an almost tenfold decrease in this kind of texts in 1930 relative to 1925.

The reasons for this decline in the volume of magazine articles on Western cinema are mainly related to the ideological and administrative struggle of the Soviets against Western influence in all spheres of culture, which intensified sharply by the end of the 1920s.

Based on the content analysis of texts published in the *Soviet Screen* magazine in the period from 1928 to 1930, we have identified the following main genres and trends within the framework of topics related to Western cinema: articles sharply criticizing the policy in the field of distribution of foreign films and the harmful influence of Western cinema on Soviet viewers; biographies and creative portraits of Western actors and directors, which were already published in much smaller volumes compared to the period of 1925–1927 and were more ideologized; reviews of Western films (also kept to a minimum and with a greater critical focus); reviews of Western national cinematographies, which on the whole give a very negative assessment of the film process in leading Western countries; articles about Western newsreels, where criticism of the bourgeois system and cinema in general was also intensified; articles about foreign film technology, studios and cinemas (perhaps the only section of the magazine that still retained an ideologically neutral presentation of facts and calls to adopt foreign technical experience, for example, in the field of sound films); short informational materials about events in foreign cinema (which, in contrast to 1925–1927, were already deprived of neutrality and photos of Hollywood stars, but were presented in a feuilleton and revealing manner).

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## Appendix

The main dates and events related to the historical, political, economic, ideological, socio-cultural and cinematic context in which the publication of the *Soviet Screen* magazine was carried out in 1928-1930

### 1928

January 10-14: the first All-Russian Conference of the Society of Friends of Soviet Cinema, which was attended by 60 delegates representing 400 regional cells of the organization, which had 35,000 members. The chairman of the Board of the Society of Friends of Soviet Cinema was Y.E. Rudzutak (1887–1938), who at that time held the post of Commissar of Railways of the USSR. On May 25, 1937 he was arrested on charges of counter-revolutionary espionage and sabotage activities, then convicted and shot on July 29, 1938. He was soon replaced by the former deputy head of the agitation and propaganda department of the Soviet Communist Party and executive editor of the newspaper *Cinema*, K.A. Maltsev (1888–1941). In 1928–1931 K.A. Maltsev was the rector of the Communist University. In 1931–1933 he was Deputy People's Commissar of Education of the RSFSR. In 1934-1936 he was a member of the Soviet Control Commission under the USSR Council of People's Commissars, authorized by the Commission for the Far Eastern territory. In 1936–1939 he was the chairman of the All-Union Committee on radio broadcasting under the USSR Council of People's Commissars. He was arrested on November 14, 1939, then was shot on July 28, 1941 on charges of counterrevolutionary espionage and sabotage activities.

January 17: L. Trotsky (1879–1940) was expelled from Moscow to Alma-Ata. Against this background, oppositionists were arrested.

February 28: A report is published on the results of the trial of a group of Leningrad filmmakers – “plunderers of socialist property”, including director N. Forreger (1892–1939): “The case is about embezzlement, forgery, fictitious accounts, statements, etc., made during the filming of the film: *Northern Lights*, *Minaret of Death* and *January 9<sup>th</sup>*. ... The main defendant, director Forreger, was found guilty of forgery and embezzlement and sentenced to three years in prison. Administrator Rapoport was sentenced to two years in prison, assistant director Dombrovsky – to 6 months in prison, Medvedev – to 1 year 6 months. The rest of the defendants were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment up to 1 year” (*Kino*, 1928, 9: 1, 4, February 28).

March 1: in a circular letter “On the spring sowing campaign” J. Stalin proclaimed a course towards intensive collectivization.

March: J. Stalin advocated accelerated development of heavy industry and the collectivization of agriculture. The “rightists” (N. Bukharin, A. Rykov, M. Tomsy, and others) insist on continuing the New Economic Policy and an alliance with the entire peasantry.

March 15-21: First All-Union Party Conference on Cinema, convened by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, approved the Resolution “The results of the construction of cinema in the USSR and the tasks of Soviet cinematography”. The following reports were heard and discussed: “The results of the construction of cinema in the USSR”, “Publicity and cinema”, “Print and cinema”.

March 23-28: trial of a group of Mezhrabpom-Rus workers. “In the dock were 17 employees of Mezhrabpom-Rus, headed by the former director Z. Darevsky (1901–1938). The main method of embezzling money invented by Darevsky was the production of fictitious accounts, which paid for the work of non-existent artists, as well as invented services and fictitious losses. According to the verdict of the court Z. Darevsky was sentenced to 8 years in prison (*Izvestia*. 1928. 75: 7. March 29; *Kino*. 1928. 14: 1. April 3).

March: the first public demonstration of sound reproduction according to the system of P. Tager (1903–1971) “Tagefon” is held in Moscow.

April 7: A meeting was held at the Glavrepertkom to revise the fund of films and clear the screen of “ideologically harmful” films.

April 10: At a meeting of the joint plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, J. Stalin delivered a speech about the “sabotage activities” of the leaders and specialists of the coal industry of Donbass.

April 25: The first plenum of the Central Council of the ODSK (Society of Soviet Cinema Friends), which discussed the results of the All-Union Party Conference on cinema.

April 30: A meeting on Kulturfilm was held at the People's Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR, convened by the Glavrepertkom.

May 1: at the post of editor of the *Soviet Screen* magazine Nikolai Yakovlev was replaced by Vasily Russo (1881-1942), who until his departure from this post (June 1928) was designated on the pages of the magazine as a temporary responsible editor.

May 9: Resolution of the Press Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party on the report on the work of the publishing house *Teakinopechat* (News of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party. 1928. 15: 9).

May 15: The Glavrepertkom began reviewing all feature film production, both foreign and Soviet production. The reasons for the prohibition of a number of films: “the idealization of the pathological and decadent moods of the decaying bourgeoisie; popularization of hidden prostitution and debauchery; romance of naked trickery and criminality; display of unjustified cruelty and sadism, designed to fray the nerves and unhealthy interest of the philistine audience; preaching bourgeois morality, mysticism, etc.” (*Kino*. 1928. May 15; *Soviet Screen*. 1928. 26. June 26).

May 20: In Germany, in the parliamentary elections, the Social Democrats increased the number of their representatives from 131 to 154 deputies. The Communists received 54 seats, the National Socialists 12 seats.

May 25 – July 12: the disaster of the airship “Italia” under the command of Umberto Nobile (1885–1978) in the Arctic, the search and rescue of the surviving crew members.

May 28: Resolution of the Board of the People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR on the creation of the artistic and political council of the Glavrepertkom, which is an advisory body.

May 30 – June 3: An All-Union Conference on the tasks of agitation, propaganda and cultural construction, including in the field of cinema, was held at the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

May: The Press Department of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party adopted a resolution on the report of the *Teakinopechat* publishing house.

July 1: at the post of editor of the *Soviet screen* Vasily Russo (1881–1942) was replaced by Vyacheslav Uspensky (1880–1929), who, heading *Teakinopechat*, again became the head of this magazine.

July 4 – July 12: Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, where J. Stalin delivered a speech “On industrialization and the grain problem”. Criticism of Stalin for the rejection of New Economic Policy by the “right” Bolsheviks (N. Bukharin, M. Tomsy, A. Rykov).

July 26: The first ever transmission of a moving image using a cathode ray tube by inventors B. Grabovsky (1901-1966) and I. Belyansky (1907–1979).

July 17 – September 1: VI Congress of the Comintern.

July: A.Y. Golyshev (1896–1937), then first deputy chairman of the Main Political-Educational Committee of the RSFSR People's Commissariat for Education, chief editor of the magazine *Communist Education*, became chairman of the Board of the Society of Friends of Soviet Cinema. On May 3, 1937 he was arrested on charges of terrorism and anti-Soviet activities, and on August 4, 1937 the Military Collegium of the USSR Supreme Court sentenced him to the capital punishment and on the same day he was shot.

August 12: Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR on the basic guidelines for the five-year plan for the development of cinema in the RSFSR (August 12, 1928), which in paragraph 9 it was recommended "to provide in the film industry development plan to gradually reduce the absolute number of foreign films in distribution in accordance with the growth of Soviet film production", and in paragraph 13 – "when developing a five-year plan of development of Soviet film production, proceed from the fact that by the end of the five-year plan the Soviet screen should, as a rule, be served by Soviet film".

September 30: The conflict between the "right" Bolsheviks and J. Stalin continued after the publication in *Pravda* of the article by N. Bukharin (1888–1938) "Notes of an Economist".

September: first public demonstration of sound reproduction using the system of A. Shorin (1890–1941) "Shorinophone".

November 6: US presidential election, Republican candidate H. Hoover (1874–1964) wins.

November 16–24: Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, which condemned the "right opportunist deviation".

December 1: 30 Soviet and 393 foreign films were withdrawn from distribution "for the purpose of clearing the screen of products of poor artistic and ideological quality".

## 1929

January 11: Decree of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party "On strengthening the of the cinematography staff".

January 24: Resolution of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party "On measures to strengthen anti-religious work".

January 29: Decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR "Regulations on the Film Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR".

January 31: L. Trotsky is expelled from the USSR.

February: Agitprop of the Central Committee of the Communist Party adopted a resolution on the work of the *Teakinopechat* publishing house.

March 4: H. Hoover (1874–1964) succeeded C. Coolidge (1872–1933) as President of the United States.

March 14: the public trial of the head of the publishing house *Teakinopechat* and editor-in-chief of *Soviet Screen* magazine V. Uspensky (*Izvestia*. 1929. 62: 8. March 16; *Kino*. 1929. 12: 2. March 19; *Evening Moscow*. 61: 1. March 15; *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. 1929. 62: 6. March 16).

March 28: Suicide editor of the *Soviet Screen* magazine V. Uspensky (1880–1929).

April 6: Fascist victory in the general parliamentary elections in Italy.

April 16: After the suicide of V. Uspensky (1880–1929) Yakov Rudoy (1894–1978) became the editor of the *Soviet Screen*.

April 16 – 23: Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, where the "right deviation" in power structures was condemned. As a result, N. Bukharin (1888–1938) was removed from his posts in *Pravda* and in the Comintern.

April 23–29: The 16th Conference of the Communist Party, which called for the development of "socialist emulation" and a "purge" in the party. The program of the first five-year plan was adopted.

May 19: Ulysses Sanabria (1906–1969) was the first to use the same range of radio waves to transmit image and sound, that is, in fact, this date can be considered the beginning of television broadcasting.

September 11: The Research Film and Photography Institute was established in Moscow.

October 6: Opening of the first sound cinema in the USSR in Leningrad.

October 24–29: stock market crash in the USA, the beginning of the global economic crisis (1929–1933), the so-called "Great Depression".

November 15: an announcement is posted on the pages of the *Soviet Screen* magazine (Nos. 44-45) that from next year the magazine will change its name to *Cinema & Life* and will be published three times a month.

November 10-17: at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, N. Bukharin (1888–1938), A. Rykov (1881–1938) and M. Tomsy (1880–1936) were again accused of “right deviation”. The plenum advocated accelerated collectivization.

November 21: The “law on defectors” is adopted in the USSR, declaring the refusal to return to the country as high treason.

December 27: J. Stalin proclaimed the policy of “eliminating the kulaks as a class”.

### 1930

January 1: Publication of the first issue of the magazine *Cinema & Life*, which became the successor of the magazine *Soviet Screen*. Yakov Rudoy (1894–1978), who headed the *Soviet Screen* (since April 1929), retained the editor of the *Cinema & Life* magazine.

January 5: Decree of the Central Committee of the Communist Party “On the pace of collectivization and measures of state assistance to collective farm construction”.

January 11: The People’s Commissariat of the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate began a “cleansing” of the apparatus of the publishing house *Teakinopechat* and checking the implementation of the instructions of the Workers and Peasants Inspectorate on the restructuring of the work of *Teakinopechat*.

January 30: Resolution of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party “On measures to eliminate kulak farms in areas of complete collectivization”.

February 13: Decree No. 56 of the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR “On the Formation of an All-Union Association for the Film and Photo Industry”.

March 1: Approval of the Model Rules of the Agricultural Artel, according to which land, livestock and implements were socialized.

March 2: Publication in *Pravda* of Stalin’s article “Dizzy with Success”, in which he blamed the negative consequences of collectivization on local authorities.

March 6: A sound cinema opened in Moscow, which showed the first Soviet sound film: *Sound Collection Program №1* (Soyuzkino, 1930, directed by A. Room, G. Levkoev), the sound was recorded by the system A. Shorin.

March 13: The Moscow Labor Exchange is closed.

March 30: The German Center Party forms a right-wing coalition government in Germany that succeeds the Social Democrats.

April 7: Decree to expand the system of labor camps, they are administered by the GULAG (Main Directorate of Camps) and subordinate to the OGPU.

April 14: suicide of the poet V. Mayakovsky (1893–1930).

April 25: Resolution of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party “On the charter of the All-Union Photo-Cinema Association and the composition of its enterprises and organizations”.

May 6: The results of the purge of *Teakinopechat* are published: “The publishing house focused mainly on the audience of commercial films and “big” theaters. A direct reflection of this was the absence in the literature published by *Teakinopechat* of products intended to serve the next political slogans and campaigns. ... the presence in the past of the publishing house’s intention to publish so-called “light” literature (postcards, librettos, biographies). All this was calculated for the petty-bourgeois tastes of the philistine masses, apolitically, devoid of a Marxist character. Only in 1930 was there a turning point in the history of mass literature in the direction of bringing it closer to the present” (*Kino*. 1930. No. 26: 1. May 6).

June 15: *Kino* newspaper published materials under the general heading “The Class Enemy in the Trenches of *Teakinopechat*” (*Kino*. 1930. 34. June 15).

June 26 – July 13: XVI Congress of the Communist Party, which crushed the right opposition. The following were elected to the Politburo: the General Secretary of the Communist Party J. Stalin (1878–1953), K. Voroshilov (1881–1969), L. Kaganovich (1893–1991), M. Kalinin (1875–1946), S. Kirov (1886–1934), S. Kosior (1889–1939), V. Kuibyshev (1888–1935), V. Molotov (1890–1986), A. Rykov (1881–1938), Y. Rudzutak (1887–1938).

June: The Society of Friends of Soviet Cinema was renamed the Society of Friends of Soviet Cinematography and Photography. Further (in September 1931 the Society of Friends of Soviet

Cinematography and Photography was reorganized into the Society "For Proletarian Film and Photography", and in April 1932, after accusations of "rappist" bias and the Central Committee of the Communist Party resolution "On reorganization of literary and artistic organizations" the work of the society was practically stopped. On July 14, 1932 there was a resolution of the All-Union Central Executive Committee about the liquidation of the Society "For Proletarian Film and Photography", which was finally abolished in 1934.

July 1: *Teakinopechat* publishing house transferred its editorial functions to "Land and Factor" publishing house.

July 22: Kolhoz Center USSR established the assessment and payment of collective farmers in workdays instead of money.

August 5: The State Technical School of Cinematography was reorganized into the State Institute of Cinematography with director, actor, cameraman, and screenwriter departments.

14 September: The Social Democrats win the German parliamentary elections (143 seats). The second place belongs to the National Socialist Party (107 seats). In third place are the Communists (77 seats).

October: B.Z. Shumyatsky (1886–1938) was appointed chairman of the All-Union State Cinema and Photo Association "Soyuzkino", who since 1933 was head of the Main Administration of Film and Photo Industry, and since 1936 deputy chairman of the Committee for the Arts under the USSR Council of People's Commissars. On the night of January 17 to 18, 1938 B.Z. Shumyatsky was arrested on charges of counterrevolutionary activity and espionage. He was further convicted and shot on July 29, 1938.

November 15: in the newspapers *Pravda* (No. 314) and *Izvestia*, M. Gorky's article "If the enemy does not surrender, he is exterminated" is published.

November 25 – December 7: the trial of the "Industrial Party".

December 19: V. Molotov (1890–1986) became chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR instead of A. Rykov (1881–1938).

December 17-21: The Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party removed A. Rykov from the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.