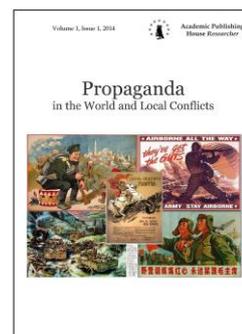


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Published in the Slovak Republic
 Propaganda in the World and Local Conflicts
 Has been issued since 2014.
 ISSN 2500-1078, E-ISSN 2500-3712
 2017, 4(1): 52-61

DOI: 10.13187/pwlc.2017.1.52
www.ejournal47.com



'Cinema Art' as part of a typical model of the Soviet humanitarian journals in the Cold War times

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Abstract

The analysis of the journal *Cinema Art* – 1977 revealed the following main film criticism trends:

- the magazine was unable to preserve the "thawing" tendencies, which were still strong even in the late 1960s, and in many ways proved to be in the ideological line of the peak of the L. Brezhnev's epoch;
- At the same time, the journal tried to analyze the most notable works of Soviet cinema, while, alas, not allowing even in minimal doses a criticism of the shortcomings in the works of the most "principally" influential at that time the screen masters;
- giving a weighty tribute to the Soviet propaganda pathos, the magazine could afford to publish the substantive discussions "on certain narrow bridgeheads".

In general, the *Cinema Art* in 1977 was part of a typical model of the Soviet humanitarian journal, which, with significant censorship concessions and powers, tried to retain at least 50% of the total text for art analysis of the film process.

Keywords: film criticism, USSR, Soviet, film, social and cultural context, politics, magazine, Cinema Art.

1. Introduction

1977 year was jubilee in the USSR: the 60th anniversary of the Soviet power was fulfilled. It is clear that as in 1967, the Soviet press (and the magazine *Cinema Art* was no exception) should have joyfully reported about all the victories and accomplishments.

Cinema Art was published monthly: from 50 to 54 thousand copies in 1977, against 30–35 thousand in 1967. In each issue included several articles about the Soviet cinema, materials of directors, screenwriters and other filmmakers, scripts and filmographies. A whole series of ideological materials were added to the traditional headings (*New Movies, Theory and History, Interview between Films, Abroad, Script, Published on the Cinema*, etc.). For example, quotation from the speeches of the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee L. Brezhnev, *Towards the 60th Anniversary of the Great October Revolution, Modernity and the Screen...*

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The editorial board of the magazine *Cinema Art* – 1977 consisted of 21 persons. As before, many of them were well-known directors (S. Gerasimov, A. Zguridi, R. Carmen, S. Yutkevich) and film functionaries. However, compared to the 1960s, film critics and film experts became approximately twice as large (almost 50 %) in the editorial board: E. Surkov (editor in chief) (1915–1988), N. Ignatieva (deputy editor-in-chief), A. Medvedev (deputy editor-in-chief), V. Baskakov (1921–1999), I. Weissfeld (1909–2003), A. Karaganov (1915–2007), K. Paramonova (1916–2005), N. Savitsky (born 1939), N. Sumenov (1938–2014) and R. Yurenev (1912–2002).

Of course, the spectrum of the authors of the journal was wider, but in comparison with the previous jubilee year (1967), it largely lost its representativeness. Yes, the list of authors still included: A. Vartanov (born 1931), Y. Warsawsky (1911–2000), M. Zak (1929–2011), N. Ignatieva (born 1923), G. Kapralov (1921–2010), A. Svobodin (1922–1999), Y. Khanyutin (1929–1978), R. Yurenev (1912–2002), etc. In addition, *Cinema Art* – 1977 also published such well-known film critics as L. Anninsky, E. Bauman (1932–2017), L. Donets (1935–2016), K. Rudnitsky (1920–1988), E. Stishova, V. Turovsky (1949–1998), but on his pages there were no articles by Y. Bogomolov (born 1937), V. Demin (1937–1993), L. Kozlov (1933–2006), L. Pogozheva (1913–1989), L. Rybak (1923–1988), I. Solovieva (born 1927), T. Khloplyankina (1937–1993), V. Shitova (1927–2002) and many other well-known film critics (among the most insulting ones, for example, are the absence of N. Zorkaya and M. Turovskaya).

Cinema Art – 1977 wrote about such notable Soviet films a *Ascension* by L. Shepitko, *Aty-baty, the Soldiers Were Walking* by L. Bykov, *I ask for Words* by G. Panfilov, *Leg-pull* by V. Menshov, *Mimino* by G. Danelia, *The Eldest Son* by V. Melnikov, *The Key Without the Right to Transfer* by D. Asanova, *The Steppe* by S. Bondarchuk, *The Tale of how Tsar Peter Married the Arap* by A. Mitta, *The Wreath of Sonnets* by V. Rubinchik, *Twenty Days Without War* by A. German, *Unfinished play for the mechanical piano* and *Slave of Love* by N. Mikhalkov, *Wounded* by N. Gubenko. Were published talented scenarios *Moscow does not believe in words* by V. Chernykh and *Reserve* by A. Bitov. But, alas, in the same year the magazine also published a servile script of a documentary about L. Brezhnev's *Story of a Communist*, and uncontrollably complimentary reviews of the very weak military drama *Thought on Kovpak* by T. Levchuk, about mediocre melodramas *Love of the Earth* and *Destiny* by E. Matveev...

2. Materials and methods

The main material for the study were 12 issues of the *Cinema Art* – 1977. At the same time, we analyzed only how the film criticism reflected on magazine's pages the Soviet feature film (although, of course, *Cinema Art* also wrote about documentary and foreign films, animation, published articles by prominent filmmakers, writers, actors, full texts of scenarios, etc.). We used the method of hermeneutic analysis.

3. Results

Anniversary texts

The jubilee articles of 1977 were often anonymous: apparently, not every film critic, even the "boss", could afford to put his signature under such, for example, articles as "*The Inspirational Care of the Party*" (*Cinema Art*, 1977: 3-8) or *The Fading Light of October* (*Cinema Art*, 1977: 1-5). Here is just one quote from such anonymous opuses, saturated with references to L. Brezhnev's speeches: *It is great and honorable duty of the masters of the Soviet screen, called to recreate the epoch-making picture of the life and accomplishments of the great Soviet people. Soviet cinema art was, is and will always be the military assistant of the party* (*Inspiring ...*, 1977: 8). In issues 10 and 11 of *Cinema Art* – 1977, such ideological texts occupied more than 50 % of the total volume of the journal.

Of course, among these articles there were also "author's" works. For example, a long & boring article of V. Dmitriev *The Humanism of the Socialist Revolution and Cinematography* (Dmitriev, 1977), exerting on references from the L. Brezhnev's "works", where it was enthusiastically asserted that *the cinematographic art of the Soviet land became communist party. The socialist primogeniture was determined by the choice initially made-together with the communist party, with the revolution, with the people!* (Dmitriev, 1977: 8).

Deputy Chairman of the Soviet Cinema Committee B. Pavlenok (1923–2012) in his party-politicized article about the current film process approved the outstanding film *Ascension* by L. Shepitko, but does not stint on the praise of long-deserved forgotten films on the historical-revolutionary topic: *Carriage from the South, Siege, Red Black Earth, Red Diplomatic Couriers* (Pavlenok, 1977: 6-14).

The indefatigable fighter of the ideological front V. Baskakov, in his article *The Cinema of Socialist Realism and the Falsification of Sovietologists*, as always (although without any convincing arguments), refuted the opinions of the bourgeois film criticism: "Whatever our ideological opponents say, no matter what "models" of the history of Soviet cinema they are, no matter how hard they try to confuse the question of the continuity of the progressive development of Soviet cinema, they will not be able to substitute the truth for falsehood, will not be able to cover up their "true" intentions and plans" (Baskakov, 1977: 52).

Film Reviews

Editor-in-chief of *Cinema Art* E. Surkov was famous for his ability to balance between the "communist party line" and the line of truly artistic. That is why, in addition to the above-mentioned ideological materials, *Cinema Art* of the 1970s was active supporter of many outstanding screen works, the publication of an interview with A. Tarkovsky and his script.

So in 1977 the magazine published two articles about the masterpiece of L. Shepitko – the military drama *Ascension* (1976). Boldly noting the biblical motifs of the film, E. Stishova rightly argued that "L. Shepitko, judging by her former films, always attracted crisis situations for the individual, the model of this situation was repeatedly tested by the director. And in "Warmth" and "Wings" characters are captured at the moment of the greatest aggravation of mutual relations with the world and with themselves. Such a sequence in the choice of characters suggests that others are uninteresting to this artist: the personality is interesting in the moment of the maximum of its human luminescence" (Stishova, 1977: 31). And Z. Kutorga stressed that the authors "conduct a social and moral investigation of the greatest heroism and self-sacrifice... In parallel, they mercilessly and consistently show the moves of self-deflection and self-justification, which naturally turn Rybak into a traitor" (Kutorga, 1977: 56).

Full support for the magazine received another masterpiece on the military theme – *Twenty Days Without War* (1976) by A. German. Y. Khanyutin noted in his brilliant article: "It is profoundly significant that an eyewitness, front-line correspondent and writer Konstantin Simonov and young director Alexei German, who did not see this war, severely, documented the desire to tell about the war honestly, harshly. Hence, in different generations there is a need to see the era of the war as it was – in high and terrible, in tragic and ridiculous, in the greatest accomplishments and in the smallest detail" (Khanyutin, 1977: 96-97).

In general, a positive review of another notable film on the military theme – *Aty-baty, the Soldiers Were Walking ...* (1976) by L. Bykov – wrote A. Medvedev.

The film critic reasonably noted that the level of "Bykov's directorial mastery did not rise to the skill level of Bykov-actor" (Medvedev, 1977: 51), but at the same time, he asserted in a positive context, that "Leonid Bykov is building a film on colorful and juicy details that have always worked in textures... He forces our feelings, forcing emotions, and now we laugh, loudly laughing, and then immediately, without transition, we are compressed from pain" (Medvedev, 1977: 48).

V. Turovsky also gave ambivalently evaluation of the poetic film about the military childhood *The Wreath of Sonnets* (1976) by V. Rubinchik: "The director doubted, hesitated, whether his own poetic gift would be enough for the film. He decided to back up himself with the poetry of Bella Akhmadulina, two poems and six sonnets of her live in the film with own life... These sonnets heavier and complicate the film action. ... The music of Bella Akhmadulina's verse, superimposed on the poetic nature of the film" (Turovsky, 1977: 114).

I believe that if the military drama *Thought on Kovpak* (1976) by T. Levchuk was on screens in 1960s, the "thawing" editorial office of *Cinema Art* would give this film a negative evaluation. But by the mid–1970s the People's Artist of the USSR, the first secretary of the Union of Cinematographers of Ukraine, candidate member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukraine T. Levchuk (1912–1998) joined

the cohort of "untouchable" directors, and *Cinema Art*, despite the low artistic level of this film, it only remained to write that "Thought on Koupak" "impresses with its scale and depth, causes a sense of pride in Soviet people, helps to better understand the revolutionary transforming power that the people, having defended freedom, applied to peaceful affairs. Undoubtedly, the Thought on Koupak is one of the best works in our cinema on a military theme in recent years" (Zemlyak, 1977: 36).

The same opinion it was possible to print in 1977 about the director's work of People's Artist of the USSR, Secretary of the Board of the Union of Cinematographers of the USSR E. Matveev (1922–2003), who played L. Brezhnev in the film *Soldiers of Freedom*. N. Tolchenova wrote the unconditionally positive review about E. Matveev's films *Earth Love* (1974) and *Fate* (1977) with not forgotten quotes from the report of L. Brezhnev (Tolchenova, 1977: 34-40).

Needless to say, in the jubilee year *Cinema Art* was simply obliged to respond to current films on the so-called historical-revolutionary topic. The drama *Trust* (1976) by V. Tregubovich was in the category of "Leniniana" of this year. V. Ishimov's very positive review of *Trust* had a lot of politics, a retelling of the plot and dialogues, but did not have the serious analysis of the movie's professional qualities.

Much more interesting was the review of E. Stishova for the melodrama *Slave of Love* (1975) by N. Mikhalkov. Of course, the article did not say a word about the fact that first this film (under the title *Unexpected Joys*) was shot by R. Khamdamov, but this shooting was banned by censorship. E. Stishova did not dispense with the stereotyped ideological phrase relating to the plot of the picture (Stishova, 1977: 98). On the one hand, E. Stishova admitted: "I see N. Mikhalkov as the artist endowed with creative courage and an innate sense of form, which provided him with such a vivid start" (Stishova, 1977: 102). But on the other hand she criticized the director, noting that film is too refined and stylish (Stishova, 1977: 101). Although the *Slave of Love*, I think, is real good melodramatic nostalgia for the departing beauty of the intelligent world on the eve of its death under a communist sickle and hammer...

Further E. Stishova remembered the previous work of N. Mikhalkov, arguing that "the plot of *Your own among strangers..*" is ethically untenable already because the Communist special service officer, in order to rehabilitate himself, must act "strangers", that is, bandit methods" (Stishova, 1977: 103). Here it is necessary to think, the author of the article tried seriously (albeit very recklessly) to convince the readers that the "crystal clean" Communist special service officers never used "gangster methods", anywhere in their life...

As a result E. Stishova concluded that N. Mikhalkov "does not notice how flirting. It happens because, in my opinion, that the primary impulse of creativity is just another formal experiment. The task how to say is put on the first place, is absolutized, all outstanding forces are thrown at its decision. The downside is indifference to the material, bordering on neglecting its historically specific moral essence. Stylization turns into an aesthetic" (Stishova, 1977: 103).

If you dismiss the pathos about "indifference" and "historically specific moral essence," the *Slave of Love*, I think, in fact, a brilliant stylization, refined and aesthetic.

It is curious that *Cinema Art* – 1977 wrote about another film by N. Mikhalkov: *Unfinished play for a mechanical piano* (1977), perhaps the best movie of this director. A. Svobodin detail and kindly analyzed the *Unfinished Play ...*, and noted that "the authors of the film freely and uninhibitedly continue the confusion of genres, acting in the spirit of the current understanding of Chekhov's dramaturgy" (Svobodin, 1977: 135).

Contemporary topics were presented in the journal with a number of outstanding works. A. Lipkov (1936–2007) in a review of the drama *I Ask for Words* (1976) by G. Panfilov accurately noticed that here "the director's attitude is as if impartial: he only objectively expounds the facts. But from the viewer he demands activity – activity of thinking, analysis, evaluation" (Lipkov, 1977: 56).

Another drama, *The Word for Legal Protection* (1976) by V. Abdrashitov was demanded no less activity of the audience. M. Zak generally praised this work, since "such films, probably, should encourage not only empathy, but also "co-creation" (Zak, 1977: 94). But he immediately drew the readers' attention to the fact that "there is a motive for a programmed discussion, well hidden in the characters and circumstances, but ready to come to the surface after" (Zak, 1977: 94).

N. Ignatieva wrote very warm review of the drama *Elder Son* (1976) by V. Melnikov: *"The connection, the penetration of genres for this director is associated primarily with this or that psychological mood, the state of the heroes. Therefore, genre joints, genre transitions are natural and organic in this film"* (Ignatieva, 1977: 53). And they generally work on the important thought of the film: *"kindness is associated with insecurity. She is always not ready for spiritual hardness"* (Ignatieva, 1977: 57).

I agree with T. Mamaladze's opinion about the melodrama *Sweet Woman* (1976) by V. Fetin: *"Restoring ... the genre of the morality sketch, it takes a concrete drama beyond the limits of one fate, correlates it, this drama, with the antisocial essence of philistine spirituality"* (Mamaladze, 1977: 26).

Dignity was appreciated and one of the best comedies of G. Danelia – *Mimino* (1977) (Troshin, 1977: 22-23).

A significant place in *Cinema Art* – 1977 was devoted to the analysis of films about childhood and adolescence.

In detail revealing the positive aspects of the drama *Wounded* (1977) by N. Gubenko, T. Jensen noted with regret that *"the scenes before and after the children's home – draws, in no uniqueness, they are all from common places. ... Actually, the lessons that childhood gives us ... a poetic and sincere in its main part..., and alas, straying to the scheme, when the action is being transferred to our days"* (Jensen, 1977: 84-86).

T. Mamaladze preceded reflections on the films of the 1970s on the school theme in the article of D. Asanova's drama *The Key Without the Right to Transfer* (1976): *"The school film" was established in the vocabulary of criticism and in the viewer's consciousness as a persistent concept. In other cases, alas, – as a persistent stereotype. It happens that our cinema "writes" on the topics of the modern school, using a set of ready-made tools, solutions and techniques. However, there are a lot of good works, although the inertia of the stamp all strives to improve the innovative reading of the topic – and sometimes leads to the course laid by the flow of the average "school film"*.

True, the scheme itself is also of considerable interest. First, one way or another, it fixes certain objective life-patterns: the emergence of "nonstandard" teachers, their opposition to the routine. The assertion in the school environment of an equally "non-standard" student, an intelligent clever man: often he conflicts with a class and a doctrinaire teacher and does not always find a way to an intelligent mentor or peer. Secondly, the study of the scheme reveals a common tendency for many school films: the school in them is not part of the mainland, not a peninsula, but an island in an endless but serene sea. Of course, the island is inhabited, inhabited by actors, but what their connections with the mainland, with the "outside world" and how this world is refracted in their characters, actions, actions – we do not know. In other words, the desire to study the life of the school in depth with all its conflicts and conflicts leads to its screen isolation from the life of the general. The article with a hard-coded name "school" is attached to everything – even to moral conflicts not of local, local origin. The island remains an island, leaving it and laying a course to the mainland, linking them with a single, unstable connection, our cinema is rarely solved. The traditional two-unit formula "school and life" breaks off at the link..." (Mamaladze, 1977:75-76).

Based on these reflections, T. Mamaladze claimed that the authors of the film *The Key Without the Right to Transfer* *"do not assess their characters, they seem to endure the action beyond the movie, take it to the mainstream of life. And life, as you know, breaks any scheme, even the most convenient and beautifully built. In the movie, there is usually no nostalgia for the school years, which is laid down in the "school film" scheme, which provides the lyric sound, which is kind to the spectator's heart. Here lyricism is achieved due to a special knowledge of the truth that the school is an institution largely lyrical, that is, based on feelings. That school is not just part of the continent, but its beginning"* (Mamaladze, 1977: 83-84).

V. Kichin approached more strictly to another film on the school topic – *Leg-pull* (1976) by V. Menshov, – arguing that *"this film reveals an unexpected ambivalence instead of the expected purposefulness. The director arranges with the viewer that there will be a debate film, a reflection film – in a word, a serious conversation. But the same, followed, clearly sound the call-sign of the film-games, film-spectacles"* (Kichin, 1977: 47).

And finally, *Cinema Art* gave deserved negative evaluation of V. Rogovoy's film *Minors* (1976) (Zhavoronkov, 1977: 42-46) and drama *Always with me ...* (1976) by S. Schuster (Mariamov, 1977: 36), and *Ivan and Kolombina* (1975) by V. Chechunov, where many shortcomings "deprives the film of the main features of the debut – the lack of young audacity, maximalism and independence of creative thinking. ... If the debut film replenishes the gallery of works of overtly gray, faceless ones, this should alarm" (Bauman, 1977: 61).

Alas, V. Chirkov wrote only about the political aspects of the *Night over Chile* (1977) by S. Alacorn (this film dedicated to the tragic events of the military coup of September 11, 1973), bypassing any artistic analysis in an article (Chirkov, 1977: 69-75).

As before, *Cinema Art* did not forget to review the movies from the national republics. Very critical, clearly argued article of A. Vartanov (Vartanov, 1977: 65-77) was about the state of affairs in Turkmen cinema.

V. Silunas wrote an article about Lithuanian cinema also in the critical way. He gave a positive opinions about the films *No One Wanted to Die*, *Stairway to Heaven*, *Hercus Mantas* and *Cleaved Sky* (Silunas, 1977: 15-40), but wrote about weakness of *Saduto-tuto* (Silunas, 1977: 29).

Reviewing the drama *The White Steamer* (1976) by B. Shamshiyev, film critic A. Medvedev noticed minor shortcomings, but on the whole gave a positive assessment (Medvedev, 1977: 54).

Film History

1977 year was, apparently, not rich in the thoughts of Soviet film theorists. In any case, the separate heading *Film Theory* did not become in the journal, and in the available heading *Theory and History*, there was no theory either.

But there were a lot of articles on the film history. In this way a large article, filled with many details, was published by R. Yurenev. It was the text about foreign creative business trip of S. Eisenstein (Yurenev, 1977). A few years later the material of this article organically entered into R. Yurenev's monograph on S. Eisenstein.

R. Yurenev's article about the creative path of the Soviet director I. Savchenko (1906–1950) in general was written in a positive way. I. Savchenko appeared on the pages of this boring article "the leading, universally recognized, revered Master & Teacher" (Yurenev, 1977: 102).

V. Shklovsky's article about the Soviet director A. Roome (1894-1976) was written much more vividly. In it, there was even a reference to the film *Strict Youth* forbidden by the Soviet censorship: "A good movie, but it has not yet appeared on screens" (Shklovsky, 1977: 156).

L. Anninsky wrote the interesting article on the topic of Leo Tolstoy and the cinema (Anninsky, 1977: 131-139): this is a kind of fragment from the future book of L. Anninsky about Tolstoy and cinematography.

The most unfortunate and trivial article of *Cinema Art* – 1977 on a historical theme is probably the text by I. Dubrovina *Moral Potential of ordinary character* (Dubrovina, 1977: 118-134), where a lively thought is practically not seen behind the succession of timid, censored arguments about the film characters of the 1930s-1950s ...

Cinema Sociology

Sociology in the *Cinema Art* – 1977 was presented by the article of D. Dondurei, where it was correctly noted that "there is no ideal spectator community that can always adequately perceive "true art", and, as sociological studies show, there is a clear, constant and constantly repeating division of the audience into groups. Some, with some degree of approximation, read the program of the work, given by its creators, decode the artistic "code" of its understanding. Others demonstrate this type of perception, which experts qualify as inadequate to the author's design. ... What does a viewer see in this or that film? How to understand the origins, motives and results of such "unprofessional" perception of art and how to properly assess them? Is such a perception, despite all its differences from the "true", "prepared", be nevertheless self-valuable – and in its own way artistic? Or are we still another, negative, second-rate pole of the same "true", "adequate" perception? These are questions that require special reflection, research" (Dondurei, 1977: 79).

Questions, I agree, are difficult and now...

Another Dondurei's thesis was as follows: "At the present time, the creation of a film that would be crowded by viewers of all cultural backgrounds, all social groups, when the most

delicate connoisseurs of art will gather in one room, and those who just do not have anything to do have jumped into the cinema. The creation of such a film is associated with so many difficulties. The audience of the cinema was stratified, differentiated into different "sub-audience" according to their attitudes. Is a great art to please all at once" (Dondurei, 1977: 60).

Here, however, the words "at the present time" are somewhat embarrassing. That such a bundle was not it earlier (for example, in the 1950s - 1960s)? But in general, D. Dondurei is right that *"there must be such a way. For example, the production of multi-layered, multi-oriented films, like mille feuille cake, which can be read by different social groups in such a way that some will see a deep comprehension of reality in them, others will be an interesting story from life, and others – lyrical digressions of the authors. Hence the special structures of the plot collisions, the inclusion of special themes of "spectator interest", "double bookkeeping" of the artistic structure of the film, and the like. Such a compact, albeit extremely complex, path will ensure in modern conditions the social functioning of the picture of its box-office and, at the same time, artistic prestige" (Dondurei, 1977: 60).*

Agree, as if it was written about the melodrama (and Academy Award winner) *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979) by V. Menshov...

4. Discussion

The editorial board of the *Cinema Art* – 1977 decided to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Resolution of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee *On Literary and Art Criticism* (1972). The editorial article (without any reference to the publication of concrete film specific critics) wrote: *"Many reviews are published (including in the "Cinema Art"), ... articles that are not correlated with the tasks put forward before our time and Communist" (Criticism ..., 1977: 7).*

Further *Cinema Art* published a discussion about the role of film criticism in modern society. The answers of some film critics (V. Baskakov, V. Zhdan, A. Karaganov) were filled with standard phrases about socialist realism, ideological struggle, etc. The film critic A. Krasinsky noted that *"you can find many reviews and articles in which a high rating of a particular film is made only on the basis of the importance and relevance of the topic. In such cases, the very low artistic level of the film is not taken into account " (Searches ..., 1977: 17).* A fair statement, as exemplified by some of the above-quoted reviews in the *Cinema Art* – 1977.

The most daring text about Soviet film criticism was written by Y. Khanyutin, reasonably asserting that *"our criticism is rather toothless. Rather, critical courage is manifested, but more and more for some reason in secondary scenes of secondary directors, or, better, foreign ones. ... and if you do not like the movie of the leading director, then it's best to bypass the side, keep silent - and then, as it were, you cannot make trouble!" (Searches ..., 1977: 25).*

Yes, Soviet film criticism for discussions (both in 1967 and in 1977) had to carefully select the material and personalities. Of course, it was impossible even to imagine that in the 1970s a principal discussion could unfold on the *Cinema Art* pages, for example, about the films *"A Story of a Communist"* (1976) or *Thoughts on Kovpak* ...

But the *Cinema Art* could afford long discussions about the films not influential directors, but about, for example, fairy tales films. In 1967, such a discussion film of the year was *Aibolit-66* by R. Bykov, in 1977 – *The Tale of how Tsar Peter Married the Arap* (1976) by A. Mitta.

True, there could be no discussion about *The Tale* ... if the well-known writer, Nobel prize laureate M. Sholokhov watched this film in the year of its creation, and not two years later... An ardent opponent of the film S. Semanov wrote about: *"In August 1977, the author of this book brought this Russophobic film to Sholokhov in Veshenskaya, the writer became very interested in them" (Semanov, 2006).* M. Sholokhov did not like this film, however, he was not in a hurry to express his opinion in writing, and sent his angry letter to L. Brezhnev only in March 1978, when the discussion about the film *The Tale of how Tsar Peter Married the Arap* in *Cinema Art*, fortunately, has already ended.

Here is a key extract from M. Sholokhov letter addressed to General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee Leonid Brezhnev (March 14, 1978): *"World Zionism, both foreign and Soviet, is aggressively attacking the Russian culture. It is widely practiced to drag through the cinema, television and the press of anti-Russian ideas, discrediting our history and culture, opposing the Russian socialist. The appearance of "The Tale of how Tsar Peter Married*

the Arap" by A. Mitta is the symptomatic in this sense. The dignity of the Russian nation is openly humiliated in this film. Tsar Peter's progressive undertakings are spoiled, Russian history and our people are ridiculed" (Sholokhov, 1978).

A tangible reaction of the authorities to this letter did not follow. The main reason for this, apparently, is that by the time of this letter the film *The Tale of how Tsar Peter Married the Arap* already widely passed across all Soviet screens, and the post factum prohibition of this movie no longer made any sense, since such actions would be a clear indication that the authorities "missed" the appearance of an "ideologically harmful" work ...

But back to the discussion about *The Tale ...* in the pages of the *Cinema Art*.

I. Zolotusky reproaching this film for the difference and genre blurring (Zolotusky, 1977: 62). Considering *The Tale...* as an unsuccessful stylization, I. Zolotusky stressed that talented "stylization requires not only loyalty to a parodied source, but also a shine of a fake – a brilliance that would eclipse the original and create the illusion of complete triumph over it. The charm of stylization in its ambiguity, in unintentional balancing on the verge of seriousness and ridicule" (Zolotusky, 1977: 63).

I. Rosenfeld, on the contrary, thought that "in the sequence, in the sense of the genre, A. Mitta, you will not refuse. Moreover, in my opinion, he managed to solve the most complicated task by introducing into the conditional "action" of Tsar Peter without violating the fabric of narration, the integrity of the film and, at the same time, not turning the sovereign into a puppet" (Rosenfeld, 1977: 48). In a similar vein also written by A. Lipkov, who insisted that "it is not the business of tale to give a comprehensive, psychologically and historically profound analysis" (Lipkov, 1977: 67).

But L. Onyshko was even more categorical than I. Zolotusky: "Despite the talent and efforts of the authors, you soon notice that the image of Tsar Peter does not fit into the chosen stylistics of the movie. He does not need this character here, not this movie. There are, after all, concepts, images, which do not joke" (Onyshko, 1977: 49).

Y. Seleznev, who considered that "despite the author's attitude to gaiety, the film as a whole is still boring, because it is monotonous. ... The main reason for the artistic disobedience of the film is, in my opinion, the artificiality of its internal idea, acting in the form of a scheme" (Seleznev, 1977: 91).

As a result, as in the case of *Aibolit-66*, the *Cinema Art* enabled critics to express different points of view, thus proving that one can always find a springboard for discussion, even in the "stagnant" times...

Book reviews

The bibliographic section of the journal was devoted to the analysis of current cinema books. I. Eventov wrote a review of the monograph by D. Moldavsky *With Mayakovsky in the theater and cinema. The book about Sergei Yutkevich* (1975). He marked controversial moments, but in general considered "it is necessary to appreciate the observations contained in it and analysis, as well as the core thoughts of the researcher" (Eventov, 1977: 138).

A. Vartanov gave the positive evaluation of A. Macheret's book *Feature film* (1975). The monograph *The Golden Section of the Screen* (1976) by S. Freilich also had the positive reaction (Dmitriev, 1977: 114-122).

Other rubrics

The rubric *Creative Portraits* has a qualified analysis of director's and actor's works of V. Shukshin (Rudnitsky, 1977: 96-125), the creative path of the actors L. Sverdlin (Varshavsky, 1977; 172-187) and T. Makarova (Yagunkova, 1977: 119-136) and the film critic N. Lebedev (Vlasov, 1977: 171-172). The column *On the set* included the reports about the filming of *Steppe* (1977) by S. Bondarchuk (Tolchenova, 1977: 101-115) and *Fate* (1977) by E. Matveev (Donets, 1977).

5. Conclusion

So, the analysis of the *Cinema Art* – 1977 revealed the following main film criticism trends:

- the magazine was unable to preserve the "thawing" tendencies, which were still strong even in the late 1960s, and in many ways proved to be in the ideological line of the peak of the L. Brezhnev's epoch;

- At the same time, the journal tried to analyze the most notable works of Soviet cinema, while, alas, not allowing even in minimal doses a criticism of the shortcomings in the works of the most "principally" influential at that time the screen masters;

- giving a weighty tribute to the Soviet propaganda pathos, the magazine could afford to publish the substantive discussions "on certain narrow bridgeheads".

In general, the *Cinema Art* in 1977, as in 1967, was part of a typical model of the Soviet humanitarian journal, which, with significant censorship concessions and powers, tried to retain at least 50% of the total text for art analysis of the film process.

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