

Kino

The Cinema Weekly of Stalin's Times

Maria Belodubrovskaya

The Moscow newspaper *Kino* circulated in Soviet Russia between 1923 and 1941. Its predecessor, *Kino-gazeta*, appeared briefly in 1918, and until March 1925 *Kino* too was called *Kino-gazeta* (literally, *Kino-newspaper*). Depending on the time period, the paper came out once every five, six, or seven days. It was the most significant and longest-running trade periodical focusing on cinema during the prewar period of Soviet film (1917–41). As such, it is an indispensable source of information for scholars of Russian film, history, and culture.

FUNCTION AND SCOPE

From March 1925, *Kino* was published by the Society of Friends of Soviet Cinema (ODSK, 1925–34), a voluntary film organization formed under the auspices of the People's Commissariat of Education, which counted among its members tens of thousands of cinema professionals and enthusiasts. From early 1932, the Central Committee of the Union for Workers in the Arts (RABIS) and Soiuzkino, the chief government agency in charge of cinema (later the Cinema Committee), published the newspaper jointly. From 1936 to 1937, *Kino* was put out by the umbrella Arts Committee, and from 1938 to 1941, when the Cinema Committee became independent from the Arts Committee, by the former agency alone. No other periodicals dealt with the film industry as such, and, as this lineage suggests, though the paper started as a venue to promote Soviet cinema, which was the mandate of ODSK, almost from the start *Kino* functioned as the official mouthpiece of Soviet state education and cinema authorities. As such, the focus of the paper was never just to deliver entertainment or entertainment news, but to deliberate and negotiate the program and practice of Soviet cinema under the Stalin regime.

This does not mean that *Kino* was not a genuine trade periodical. On average, only one page in each issue was obligatorily devoted to official business, such as the Communist Party Central Committee's resolutions on cinema, the Cinema Committee's own decisions, programmatic editorials, and—in the late 1930s—reprints of speeches from the central party press. Though all published text in the Soviet Union was censored for political reasons and only subjects approved by the Party-affiliated editorial board ever appeared in print, much of *Kino*'s coverage dealt with actual problems of the industry, starting with feature-production planning and execution, followed by exhibition and distribution, and ending with technology, nonfiction film, film education, and the like. One of the paper's primary functions was to critique new screenplays and films. Its reviews provided early, less censored evaluations of new works, so much so that on occasion *Kino* had to contradict itself in subsequent reviews to match the assessment the work had received in the national press.

COVERAGE AND IMPORTANCE

While most of the coverage was “opinion” as opposed to objective news, one of *Kino*'s main offerings as a primary source is documentation of events. Although scholars of Soviet cinema have recently gained access to the extensive and highly reliable *Chronicles of Russian Cinema* compiled by Aleksandr Deriabin and colleagues,¹ *Kino* remains valuable to film historians because it gives us a different, more proximate access to what the film process really looked like week after week. The paper helps us understand why certain developments were discussed, avoided, or delayed, and who was working on what, and when. Some *Kino* articles were controversial when published, despite editorial supervision. The editorial board marked such risky articles with an asterisk and supplied a note, “For discussion purposes only.” Just seeing what topics received an asterisk is useful to a historian. Some *Kino* articles were written in response to previous articles, and from issue to issue we can observe opposing views vigorously stated and refuted. For example, 1934 saw a genuine debate on whether “the thematic plan” was an appropriate designator for the Soviet studios' production programs. Thematic plans are now considered one of the fundamental features of Soviet filmmaking, but in 1934 there was still disagreement on whether production ought to be organized around content (the “themes” of the future films) or around practical considerations such as the availability of directors, stars, stories, and screenplays. The paper is also a source of screenplay versions. Occasionally, it featured excerpts from screenplay drafts or screenplay proposals. These are different from versions that appear in archives or in secondary sources and are excellent approximations of filmmakers' early intentions. Most importantly, names and activities of many uncredited individuals who made films—as well as critics, journalists, apparatchiks, and below-the-line personnel such as administrators, technicians, projectionists,

and censors—can be found, usefully contextualized, in *Kino*'s pages. Some of these data are not retrievable elsewhere.

One simple historical trajectory that researchers can trace through the pages of *Kino* is which films mattered for the film industry at various points. The newspaper routinely reported on films: films planned, films under production, films delayed, films made, films released, and films banned. But these were typically discussed starting on page 3 in the four-page editions of the 1930s, and even later in the longer editions of the 1920s. However, some films also featured on pages 1 and 2, which meant that the Cinema Committee considered them particularly important. Which films were they? Take the year 1934, for example. Today's experts on Russian cinema would likely expect films like *Chapaev*, *Jolly Fellows*, *Peasants*, and *The Youth of Maxim* to be prominently profiled in *Kino* in 1934. These four films, all celebrating the Communist Party to an extent, are now considered canonical examples of Stalinist cinema. However, only one of these pictures, *Chapaev* (Georgii Vasil'ev and Sergei Vasil'ev, 1934), a heroic biopic about a legendary Russian Civil War commander, received notable front-page attention in 1934. The peasant comedy *Jolly Fellows* (Grigorii Aleksandrov, 1934), the communist biopic *The Youth of Maxim* (Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg, 1934), and *Peasants* (Fridrikh Ermler, 1934), a drama set on a collective farm and featuring an animated tribute to Stalin, were covered, but in short columns and under inconspicuous headlines.

Several films that did receive substantial front-page profiles are described below. On top of the list was *Chelyuskin* (Arkadii Shafran and Mark Troianovskii, 1934), a documentary about the rescue of the crew of the steamer *Chelyuskin* that had been crushed by ice in the Arctic in February 1934. The film got covered twice as prominently as *Chapaev* and three times as frequently as just about every other title, though this was likely because the *Chelyuskin* disaster was all over the front pages of all newspapers at the time.² The second most discussed film of 1934 was *Boule de suif* (Mikhail Romm, 1934), an adaptation of the story of a patriotic sex worker by Guy de Maupassant. Third and fourth in popularity were the now canonical *Aerograd* (Aleksandr Dovzhenko, 1935), about a new Socialist city, and *Chapaev*, respectively. These were closely followed by *Thunderstorm* (Vladimir Petrov, 1934), a classic nineteenth-century melodrama based on a play by Nikolai Ostrovskii, and Dziga Vertov's *Three Songs about Lenin* (1934), a eulogy to Vladimir Lenin. This is a surprising list, especially so because it includes two classic melodramas. We are used to associating 1934 in the history of Soviet cinema with the establishment of socialist realism, an aesthetic promoting the new socialist state, whose crowning achievement was *Chapaev*. Yet *Chapaev* only appears on the list due to the out-sized attention the film received after its release in November 1934.³ Besides, not one headline in *Kino* from 1934 contains the phrase *socialist realism* (*Bolshevik art*, yes, but not *socialist realism*).

Chapaev and socialist realism were not at the center of the Soviet film industry's agenda in 1934, and this is clear from the themes and debates contained in the

pages of *Kino*. Instead, production planning was the key problem in 1934. January issues were devoted to production planning, or what kinds of films would be made that year and whether the studios or the Cinema Committee would decide which projects could move forward. The next problem was actors and genres: in March, *Kino* ran a series of articles on the role of the actor in the creative process, on science fiction film, and on literary adaptations. April was devoted to a scandal involving director Abram Room, who was accused of overspending on his production *Once over the Summer* (completed by a different team in 1936). At the same time, *Kino* published reports about the Cinema Committee's plans to reorganize filmmaking. The Room affair related to these plans, as overspending exemplified disorganization targeted by the reform. In May and June of 1934 the paper focused on the screenplay, and in June and July it revisited production planning in preparation for the industry-wide planning conference launched in Moscow on July 15. The coverage for the rest of 1934 is so diverse that it is hard to identify one topic emphasized over others.

Notwithstanding the fact that a portrait of Stalin appears on *Kino*'s front page about a dozen times in 1934, the paper continued to be a true trade periodical covering industry issues comprehensively, dynamically, and relatively openly. This is perhaps most clear from each issue's page 4, the last page of the paper, which contained ads for upcoming releases. The ads typically included a visual from the film, some information about the story, and the names of principal creators. But the centerpiece of the ad was the title, typically presented in a large, striking, dynamically positioned font. Once again, given what we think we know about the history of Soviet cinema in 1934, we would never guess which films' titles got printed in the boldest font in release ads. Ever heard of *The Royal Sailors* (1934)? This was a silent film about a revolt on a British ship made by a rather successful filmmaker, Vladimir Braun, who specialized in sea adventure. *The Royal Sailors* does not survive, but, judging by *Kino*'s design efforts, it was one of the most commercially viable films of 1934. The only film that compares, in terms of font size, is Vertov's *Three Songs about Lenin*—also a surprise, considering how unpopular Vertov and his entire brand of documentary filmmaking was supposed to have been by this time.⁴ Three other films that get sizable-letter treatment are unpredictable too: *Revenge* (Evgenii Griaznov, Vostokfilm/Yalta Studio, 1933), *Jou* (Aleksandr Litvinov, Mosfilm, 1934), and *Gikor* (Amasi Martirosyan, Armenkino, 1934). All three are silent films, though about half of the films Russia produced by 1934 were sound films.⁵ Two do not survive, even though most films from the 1930s are extant. Two are made by minority studios or focus on minority ethnic groups. And though all deal with Soviet topics—class struggle (*Revenge*), the exploitation of the Inuit in the Arctic (*Jou*), and the tragic life of a child under Armenian feudalism (*Gikor*)—all appear to be popular (melo)dramas rather than socialist-realist “masterpieces.” Equally noncanonical films are advertised in some of the most striking ads: *Revolt of the Fishermen* (Erwin Piscator, 1934), *The Dreamers* (David Mar'an, 1934), and *The Last Ball* (Mikheil Chiaureli, 1934).

In terms of political repressions, 1934 was relatively peaceful. Yet in 1937, one of the most violent years in Soviet history, *Kino* looked very similar to its 1934 incarnation. Once again, it is impossible to pick out specific trends, since the paper reported on a wide variety of topics. As before, page 1 was dedicated to cinema's participation in the life of the country; pages 2 and 3 to types of features, plans, and productions; and page 4 to exhibition, minority forms and studios, and foreign and production news. Twice that year, however, the paper's normal look and character changed as Stalinist politics suddenly spilled all over its pages. This happened for the first time in issue 5, dated January 29, 1937. The front-page headlines of the issue read, "Hatred and Contempt for the Renegades of Humanity, Enemies of Socialist Culture, Enemies of the People!" and "Harshly Punish the Traitors!" With these headlines, the newspaper reported on the Second Moscow Show Trial, January 23–30, 1937. The trial falsely condemned leading figures in the Communist Party of participating in the made-up Trotskyite conspiracy against the Soviet state. It unleashed Stalin's Great Terror (1937–38), during which many highly talented and completely innocent people, including some in the film industry, were arrested and shot on suspicion of harboring foreign sympathies, which in Stalin's mind threatened disloyalty during the looming war in Europe. The message of the trial was so important for the authorities to communicate that every periodical had to report on it, and with appropriate vitriol.

The political upheaval created by the trial is visible in the scope of *Kino's* content. After January 29, 1937, its overall coverage shrank. Issue 1 for 1937 contains a total of thirty-nine articles, and issue 2 contains thirty-two articles, while February issues 7, 8, and 9 contain just twenty-three, twenty-eight, and twenty-three articles, respectively. Only by issue 11, dated March 4, did the newspaper bounce back to its previous vigor. But then, another disaster struck. Sergei Eisenstein's highly anticipated *Bezhin Meadow* was banned by a Central Committee decree on March 5, 1937. We can tell that this event came as a total shock to the industry, because the newspaper said nothing about it until issue 14 on March 24, 1937. In that issue, a front-page article, "The Lessons of *Bezhin Meadow*," reported on the three-day conference held March 19–21 by the Cinema Committee to address the "suspension" of the film. The *Bezhin Meadow* affair took over the entire second page of issue 14 and came up again and again in subsequent issues. Then, as if to reinforce the rhetoric of the January Moscow Show Trial, issue 15 published Stalin's programmatic speech of March 3, 1937, "Defects of Party Work and Measures for Liquidating Trotskyite and Other Double Dealers." (The main Party newspaper *Pravda* also published the speech with a delay, on March 29, so there is nothing noteworthy about *Kino's* timing here.) Stalin's speech painted a picture of the Soviet polity deeply infiltrated by traitors and enemies. Its text took three entire pages of issue 15, and page 4 featured articles illustrating the purported subversive activities in the film industry, naming the production of *Bezhin Meadow* among them. As a result, the total number of articles in this issue of *Kino* plummeted to four. Issue 16 contained another speech by Stalin and some concordant reactions

from the film community on pages 2 and 3. But on pages 1 and 4, the paper defiantly returned to its normal groove. Issue 17 contained twenty-nine articles. When, in April 1937, the paper carried a speech about Trotskyite wreckers by the head of Soviet government Vyacheslav Molotov, that speech also appeared only on pages 2 and 3. The *Bezhin Meadow* affair moved down to page 4. Overall, though there is no denying that the language of the paper became more stilted in 1937 in the atmosphere of Stalin's attacks on the country, *Kino* continued to function as a trade periodical even then.

Only between January 1938 and May 1939 did the paper become so affected by the country's politics that it occasionally stopped reporting on cinema. In January 1938, Boris Shumiatskii, the longtime head of the Cinema Committee (1930–37) and an advocate of genre cinema and Hollywood production methods, was arrested and subsequently executed as a Trotskyite. His replacement, Semen Dukel'skii, came from the security services, supposedly to clean up the Trotskyite lair fostered by Shumiatskii at the Cinema Committee. Dukel'skii soon announced the closure of many films then under production that did not meet the political requirements of the day. The filmmakers, however, did not take to Dukel'skii, and in early June 1939 he was replaced by Ivan Bol'shakov, who was much closer to Shumiatskii in approach.

The change in *Kino*'s coverage in 1938 occurred gradually. Only a single issue of the paper (no. 11) is devoted entirely to the third and last Moscow Show Trial, the Trial of Twenty-One (March 2–13, 1938). For the rest of the year, the paper got away with dedicating only two pages per issue to Party-related business. And every time, such reporting was either motivated by a holiday (such as Red Army Day or the anniversary of Lenin's death) or clearly mandated from above, as when page 1 of issue 53 featured the article "On the Mounting of Party Propaganda in Connection with the Publication of *The Short Course on the History of VKP(b)*" (*The Short Course* was a new textbook on the history of the Communist Party edited by Stalin). Things got worse for cinema reporting in 1939. Between January and May 1939, *Kino* published twenty-five issues. Four of these issues said little about cinema, and two contained nothing about cinema at all. Issue 6, February 5, 1939, contained "the theses" of Chairman Molotov's upcoming report to the 18th Communist Party Congress, "The Third Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Economy of the USSR." The report covered the first two pages of the paper and spilled onto page 3. In issues 12, 13, and 14, the trade paper went numb. Issue 12 contained three articles: Molotov's opening address at the 18th Party Congress, Stalin's speech at the Congress, and a tiny piece at the bottom of page 4 reporting that Dukel'skii had been awarded an Order of Lenin "for his outstanding contribution to the development of Soviet cinema." Issue 13 comprised one article: Molotov's report on the Third Five-Year Plan. Issue 14 contained more speeches from the Congress and four tiny reports on the industry at the bottom left corner of the last page. The paper recovered somewhat by issue 15, in which page 3 led with a big, bold film title (Aleksandr Dovzhenko's *Shchors*), as if to signal that the paper was

back, but the Congress and its resolutions tainted the coverage for some time, keeping the number of articles per issue low. By July 1939, however, likely encouraged by the departure of Dukel'skii, the paper was back, looking very much like itself. With the exception of one issue, number 59, entirely devoted to Stalin, no other issue in 1939 was dominated by official business. And, whereas only sixteen out of sixty issues in 1938 contained release ads, twenty-eight out of sixty did in 1939.

Remarkably, the nature of the films advertised in the paper did not change in the late 1930s. Though, as we just saw, not every issue contained advertisements, and the ads became less conspicuous over time (a seven-column footer in dark ink in 1935–37 became a box the width of two columns in 1939–41), the paper continued to promote new films. And, as before, hardly any officially recognized socialist-realist “masterpiece” was among these. About fifteen films received eye-catching ads on page 4 in 1937, for instance, but only one was an officially supported biopic: Mikhail Romm's *Lenin in October* (1937). The rest were either children's adventure films and literary adaptations (e.g., *Tom Sawyer*, Lazar' Frenkel' and Gleb Zatvornitskii, 1936) or melodramas (e.g., *Almas*, Grigorii Braginskii and Aga-Rza Kuliev, 1936). The vast majority were made at regional studios and by filmmakers we do not know today. This trend to advertise films that would have popular appeal rather than socialist-realist pedigree continued to the end of *Kino's* run. Among about forty fiction titles advertised in 1940 (when nonfiction films also got ads), only three became official successes, two were later banned, and the others comprised non-prestige comedies, melodramas, and adventure movies. The conclusion that they were picked for their popular and even commercial prospects rather than their political value is supported by the fact that among them were two American musical films: *The Great Waltz* (Julien Duvivier, 1938) and *One Hundred Men and a Girl* (Henry Koster, 1937).

DESIGN AND EDITORS

The size of the paper changed somewhat initially but stabilized by the end of 1931. In 1928 and 1929, the paper looked similar to Hollywood trade periodicals such as *The Film Daily*. Each issue had eight pages with five columns of text each. Page 6 was devoted to letters to the editor and advertisements, and pages 7 and 8 were entirely assigned to boxed ads. The newspaper primarily advertised films about to be released, but there were also ads for books, periodicals, studios' release programs, and film stock and equipment. Important for exhibition research, the last page of every issue had a section detailing the repertory of Moscow's biggest cinemas. In the first half of 1930, the paper vacillated between a four-page format and an eight-page format, though both versions typically contained ads. With issue 37, the paper dropped the ads, and after that only the repertory section and one or two ads for new releases were printed in each issue. The film ads persisted to the end of *Kino's* run in 1941, but the repertory section gradually disappeared between October and December of 1935, when the paper switched to profiling new releases



FIGURE 13.1. *Kino* title graphics in 1926–1930, early 1931, late 1931, and 1931–1934.

alone. In 1931, the five-column format with up to eight pages transformed into the seven-column width, and the paper settled on the four-page length.

The title design of the paper changed radically only twice between 1925 and 1941. The first transformation occurred in the early 1930s when the ornate Art Deco-ish title was replaced by a heavier and more industrial one (see figure 13.1). Shortly thereafter, this version of the lettering “KINO” appeared with an underline,



FIGURE 13.2. *Kino* title graphics in December 1934, in 1938, and in 1941.

a style which the periodical maintained for a while. The second change occurred in 1934, coinciding with a major political shift of the 1930s: the start of the Great Terror. Historians have always traced the origins of Stalin's persecution campaign to the assassination of the Leningrad Party boss Sergei Kirov, on December 1, 1934. The circumstances of this event remain mysterious to this day, but Kirov was an extremely popular leader. His assassination put Stalin on high alert or, if Stalin himself was involved, allowed Stalin to justify his subsequent witch hunt for internal enemies. *Kino* reported Kirov's death on the front page of issue 56 on December 4, 1934. That issue also had a new editor, to be discussed momentarily. Issue 59 of December 22, 1934, debuted new graphics for the paper's title, which are hard to describe other than to say that the lettering was more sophisticated and less industrial than the earlier version (see figure 13.2). This design persisted to the end of *Kino*'s existence, with minor modifications.

Who were the editors of *Kino*? This question requires additional research, as only one person on *Kino*'s editorial board was a celebrity. The celebrity was Sergei

Eisenstein. Between October 1, 1930, and November 10, 1931, Eisenstein served on the editorial board, as listed on page 4 of every issue. This does not mean Eisenstein was closely involved: he was abroad this entire time. However, it tells us something about the orientation of the paper. During this span the paper replaced two pages of ads with two pages of articles on cinema. Perhaps Eisenstein or the presence of his name among the editors had something to do with this change.

While it might be tempting to ascribe the fortunes of *Kino* to the influence of its editor at any given moment, I contend that we cannot necessarily learn much about the periodical by researching the careers or commitments of its editors. The same person (Aron Mitlin), for example, was in charge from 1938 to 1941, so the publication dynamics I discussed above do not seem to have depended on the editor. All the editors had proven Party credentials—otherwise they would not have held this position. Konstantin Mal'tsev, for example, worked at the Central Committee Propaganda Department before becoming the editor of *Kino* as the chairman of the Society of Friends of Soviet Cinema (ODSK), the paper's initial publisher. He went on to head the Party Department at *Pravda*, the country's main newspaper, after leaving *Kino* in 1930. Mikhail Korol', who had literary ambitions and authored a screenplay, worked as a Soviet spy abroad between 1935 and 1938. Yet compare these credentials to those of Grigorii Vovsy, another editor, in charge in the mid-1930s. He was a Party man, too, but of a much milder variety. He had a literary education and never worked for either the Central Committee or security services. He was a career editor. Vovsy was arrested and killed as a "Trotskyite conspirator" during the Great Terror in 1938. Aron Mitlin, *Kino*'s last editor, was a similar type.

What is more telling are the periods of time in which the editors were stable and those in which they changed often. There were stretches of time when one person remained in charge for a long time: Mal'tsev for all of 1928 to January 1930; Korol' from August 1932 to December 1934; Vovsy from December 1935 to March 1937; and Mitlin from February 1938 to October 1941. These were indeed the periods of relative stability in the industry. In contrast, between January 1930 and the middle of 1932 the industry underwent a major restructuring (including the creation of one countrywide cinema agency, Soiuzkino), and during this time *Kino* was run by four different editors, jointly by the editor and the editorial board, and at times by only the editorial board without an editor. During the year between Kirov's murder, in December 1934, and December 1935, *Kino* had two "interim" editors, first Iosif Krinkin and then Nikolai Lebedev. Krinkin was reportedly close to cinema chief Shumiatskii and had worked for the secret police in the past. He was arrested in 1938 and spent five years in labor camps on false political charges. Lebedev was a film historian, critic, and editor who is best known today as an occasional director of the Moscow State Cinema Institute, VGIK.

Judging by the editorial reshuffling at *Kino*, the most uncertain period in pre-war film history was the year 1937. That is, in fact, the case. In 1937, Eisenstein's

Bezhin Meadow was banned, and Shumiatskii's standing precipitously deteriorated in the lead-up to his arrest in January 1938. In less than one year, between issue 14 in March 1937, on *Bezhin Meadow*, and issue 9 in February 1938, *Kino* witnessed five editorial changes. Vovsy was succeeded by four "interim" editors in turn: Iogann Al'tman, a career editor; E. M. Tamarkin, a Central Committee Propaganda Department functionary; Pavel Bliakhin, a career art administrator, a playwright, and an editor of *Kino* back in 1926; and Iakov Boiarskii, another art functionary and a friend of Nikolai Ezhov, then chief executioner of the Great Terror. Ezhov, whose portrait appears prominently on the front page of *Kino* number 34 (July 22, 1937), was arrested in 1939 and shot in 1940 for "counterrevolution." Boiarskii was arrested and shot in connection with Ezhov, also in 1940. Mitlin's name appears in *Kino* for the first time on February 23, 1938.

As this analysis suggests, *Kino* was a resilient institution. Its editorial policy remained relatively consistent throughout its history, as the paper stubbornly attempted to keep a finger on the pulse of Soviet film culture. Though obviously self-censored and conforming to the politics of the day, as every news venue did under Stalin, the paper maintained its look, identity, readership, and even a sense of humor.⁶

DEAR BOY CINEMA

Speaking of humor, the paper is a source of visual material that goes beyond film ads and title graphics. It contains photographs of individuals and groups, film production stills, and caricatures. Caricatures in particular are a poignant indicator of the mood and morale of the film industry month by month. When I say caricatures, I mean two things: humorous drawings satirizing something (e.g., the screenplay shortage or production delays) and portraits. Though the latter often fulfill an informational function of supplying an image of an individual discussed in the text, the paper rarely presents the individual straight. The illustrations are often rendered in an exaggerated, grotesque style, sometimes subtly so and sometimes not. Who gets drawn this way and who does not reveals who was and was not taken seriously. For example, there are a few drawings of cinema chief Shumiatskii, some of which are satirical. His replacements, Dukel'skii and Bol'shakov, are featured only in photographs, though there is at least one caricature of Bol'shakov I have found (not in *Kino*, but in the popular satirical journal *Krokodil*). You could apparently lampoon Shumiatskii and Bol'shakov—but not Dukel'skii. This tells us something. In fact, one could write a history of Soviet cinema based on *Kino* caricatures alone.

Caricatures were not the only ludic feature of *Kino*. Though its language was often generic, the paper could also be entertaining and light. *Kino* accompanied some articles with spirited headlines and published verses and satirical pieces about industry developments. To give just one example, the issue of February 15,

1940, was dedicated the twentieth anniversary of Soviet Cinema (Russian studios were nationalized in January 1920). The first page of this double issue was graced with the portraits of Lenin and Stalin, quotes about cinema by Lenin and Stalin, a greeting from Stalin, and an oversized graphic of a cameraman filming Red Square. Page 2 addressed the issue “Communism and Cinema.” Page 5, however, featured three caricatures. A large one presented Sergei Eisenstein pirouetting in a tutu—Eisenstein was staging *Die Walküre* at the Bolshoi Theatre at the time. A smaller one featured Boris Chirkov playing the accordion in his title role in *The Youth of Maksim*. And next to it a grouping captioned “The Cherkasovs: Family Portrait” depicted five ghostly figures of Nikolai Cherkasov (Alexander Nevsky in Eisenstein’s *Alexander Nevsky*, 1938) in his title roles. Page 7 included a piece by writer Evgenii Gabrilovich called “Dear Birthday Boy!” a loving reprimand to dear boy, cinema, in the form of birthday wishes. On page 8, a sketch of popular film characters marching in a parade supplemented a poetic panegyric by satirist Vil’gel’m Granov on the pinnacles of Soviet cinema to date.

DIGITIZATION

A large number of issues of *Kino* from 1924 to 1926 and a sampling of those from 1928 to 1930 are digitized by ElectroNekrasovka (<http://electro.nekrasovka.ru/editions/>), the site of the Central Nekrasov Library in Moscow. The rest of the issues are available both as unpreserved originals and electronically at major research libraries in Russia. In the US, the paper is available only on microfilm or as low-resolution scans in the collection of Soviet Newspapers distributed by Brill (<https://brill.com/view/db/sco>). It is crucial that the paper be made available more broadly, and this effort is currently underway (<https://archive.org/details/mediahistory?query=kino>). *Kino* is the most important primary source on Soviet film practice between 1923 and 1941, and no reliable historical research is possible without it. A rich and almost entirely unexplored repository of information on discourses, images, personalities, activities, institutions, and issues of the time, it has the potential to generate many new research questions about both Russian culture and transnational cinema.

NOTES

1. Aleksandr Deriabin, ed., *Letopis’ rossiiskogo kino, 1863–1929* (Moscow: Materik, 2004), and *Letopis’ rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945* (Moscow: Materik, 2007).
2. Profiles of films on the front page are calculated using the total number of mentions, the kind of coverage received, and the size and number of accompanying visuals.
3. For more on the surprise of *Chapaev*, see Maria Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to Plan: Filmmaking under Stalin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), 110–11. On *Chapaev*, see Julian Graffy, *Chapaev* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).
4. On *Three Songs about Lenin*, see John MacKay, “Allegory and Accommodation: Vertov’s *Three Songs of Lenin* (1934) as a Stalinist Film,” *Film History: An International Journal* 18, no. 4 (2006): 376–91.

5. Vincent Bohlinger, "The Development of Sound Technology in the Soviet Union during the First Five-Year Plan," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 7, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 189–205. See also Valérie Pozner, "To Catch Up and Overtake Hollywood: Early Talking Pictures in the Soviet Union," in *Sound, Speech, Music in Soviet and Post-Soviet Cinema*, ed. Lilya Kaganovsky and Masha Salazkina, 60–80 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014); Lilya Kaganovsky, *The Voice of Technology: Soviet Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1928–1935* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

6. Between 1933 and 1939, *Kino*'s circulation expanded from 11,000 to 40,000. During the same period, the circulation of *Kino*'s only competitor, journal *Iskusstvo kino* (Cinema Art), grew only from 5,000 to 6,000.

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