Russia And Film Essay, Research Paper

RUSSIA AND FILM

As most other things in Russia, the film industry was heavily regulated by the government. This meant that movies produced were not to put a poor light on the Russian way of things. This can be seen clearly in Russian war movies. For Russia, as most countries, there are two types of war movies. The first type of movie is made during the war that it is about. This type commonly puts a good face on the war. Its main purpose is to put the people on the home front at ease by showing them that the war is going well. It can also be used to show model citizens and how they would act in a war time situation. The second type of movie is made well after the war, a few years to a decade or two later. In this type of movie the viewer gets a more realistic view of the war. It is usually shows the bad points of the war and how if affected those involved. In Russia it was no different except that with government regulations came heavy censorship. This meant that nothing that made the Soviet Union look bad in any way would be released. So few if any of the post-war movies were released until the late 80 s or after.

In any country the movies made during a war have a specific goal or message. That goal or message almost always relays how powerful a leader or country is. For example, in Ivan the Terrible, part 1 (Eisentein, 1943 45) the purpose was to glorify the historical Russian character of Ivan the Terrible. This was done to compare Ivan the Terrible to Stalin. They were both powerful men at the head of the Russian State who fought to keep the country safe from outsiders. In the movie they even used the Germans as an enemy of Ivan just as the Nazi s were the real life counter-parts with Stalin. The movie also illustrated the idea that if a person was not for the union of Russia it was against Russia and therefore its enemy. This point is seen in another wartime movie called No Greater Love (1942). One scene shows a man who was not willing to become a freedom fighter to oppose the invading Nazis. Since he was not willing to fight for the freedom of Russia he was automatically the enemy. As the character tried to leave to go back to his Nazi occupied farm he was shot by another Russian. Throughout wartime cinema there can be seen mottoes and examples for the people to live by and up to.

On the opposite end of this idea is that of the war movie made after the war itself. These movies tend to be dark and dismal. An example of this is the movie Commissar (Askoldov, 1967 / 1987). This movie is focuses on the struggles of a female commander in the Red Army during the revolution. She accidentally gets pregnant and is forced to give up her place in the army to give birth. Initially upon discovering that she was pregnant she tried to kill the baby by drinking iodine. If it is discovered that she has gotten pregnant she could be executed. By the end of the movie she decides that the military and the war are more important to her than the child is. The child is left behind and the commander goes off to fight the war. This movie shows the negatives in a war that was hailed for its ideas of equality. It also focused on how the Jewish population in Russia was abused by everyone, including the military. This was a fact that was denied by the official channels for years and years.

In Russia and the world movies play and important part of how the people perceive what is and did happen. A war movie can raise hopes and backing for a conflict. A movie can also have the public turn there back to it and deny any and all help by painting a poor and grim picture. The Soviet Union controlled this and lived by the motto ignorance is bliss where it concerned its people.

From the beginning of the cinema most films have had a biased or prognostic undertone to them. In viewing several Russian movies from the 1920 s through to present day there can be seen many levels of propaganda. There were subtle movies such as Aelita, Queen of Mars (1924) that showed the importance of the engineer in the new Soviet State and the ever-present danger of the enemy within. Then there were the no so subtle movies like Battleship Potemkin (1925) were a crew mutinied and took control of the ship during the 1905 Revolution. It showed the cruelty of the government in power and how all peoples should stand as brothers in the fight for the new Russia. In this realm of propaganda movie making the old adage he who speaks the softest is heard the most seemed to be a popular choice. The movies with the very sublet and illusive propaganda were usually the best form for the job.

At one point in Russian history a Soviet leader was raised to the status of a living god. Joseph Stalin led the Soviet Union through the Great Patriotic War, World War 2, and into a new era of world power and presage. He and his people used many means to elevate him to this status of a living god. One of their tools was the film industry. In the movie Ivan the Terrible, part 1 (Eisenstein, 1943-45) Stalin was compared to this historical figure in an indirect way, but the comparison made was easily understood.

Ivan was a man who came to power in Russia s early history. He took all of the outlying lands and consolidated them into one country. He ended the rule of many of the lords and princes and took sole control of their lands. Ivan fought off invaders and reclaimed lost lands from outsiders. He was also a friend of the people, beloved and adored by them. The movie showed how Ivan s love and dedication to a country could bring greatness to all. The man who would bring this greatness must have the backing of the people and those people must also love and be dedicated to the country and to the higher ideals proposed. If one were to watch the movie and take it at face value it is an uplifting movie giving hope to the viewer of a better tomorrow. If that viewer were to look beneath the actual content of the movie they would see the direct comparison to Stalin. They would see that it was about Stalin s battle with the Nazi s and Russians who sat idly by as their lands were taken from them. How he thought it was necessary to maintain and add to the Soviet Union to increase its greatness and power.

Where Ivan the Terrible had a very specific purpose of promoting a single person other films had a more general theme. For example in the film Ballad of a Soldier the goal was not to invoke a feeling of admiration for a single person, but to promote the idea of selfless sacrifice for the greater good. This film is set during the Great Patriotic War and focuses on a single soldier. He is young and far from home on the front lines of the war. In the face of oncoming Nazi armor he demonstrates bravery and skill by defeating them as his comrades ran off. He is offered decorations but asks only for a few days leave to visit his mother so he can help her with some home repairs. This first point is important because it tries to show that you, as a Soviet citizen, should not be concerned with personal advancement but concerned with the well being of your fellow citizens and the State. He is given a few days leave as well as extra traveling days to get home and back. On the way he does favors for fellow military comrades and they do favors for him. This shows once again that the importance of the individual does not come before the group. He also helps a young woman who is trying to get home. He does so without any need for reimbursement, just because it seems the right thing to do. All the way he is a gentleman, not making advances toward her. This point is demonstrating the importance of being trust worthy and wholesome. He is unfortunately killed during the war and his body is not sent home for burial. In the beginning of the film, before the story had been told, the viewer was told that the mother should not be saddened about her son s loose and that he is buried so far away. He died for the good of the Soviet Union and is an honored part of her history.

In these two movies there can be seen subtle propaganda. A reason to follow a leader. A reason not to mourn the loose of lost soldiers. These are both powerful movies and are able to make the view understand the reason behind them in a way that he or she might not even be aware.

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