Glorification of Russian Conspirators in Russian and Early Soviet Cinematography: The Image of S. G. Nechaev

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Abstract: In her Paper, Dunja Dogo aims to show how one specific historical character as well as radical revolutionist, S. G. Nechaev, was treated in «Дворец крепость» («The Palace and the Fortress», 1924)—the first Soviet full-length fictional films on Russian Populists and directed by A. V. Ivanovsky for the Leningrad State cinematographic production «Sevzapkino». The screenplay of this film was written by the prominent historian and man of letters P. E. Shchiogolev, who made use of newly available archival material for the purpose of featuring history for the masses.

One key question shall guide Dogo’s Paper: in this cinematic text, through which narrative devices were the stories of the recent revolutionary past reorganised and reinterpreted in relation to the projects dominating in the Soviet post-revolutionary present?

Keywords: Historical Memory in Post-Revolutionary Russia, Narratives of the History of Russian Populism, Early Soviet Cinema, Sergei M. Nechaev, Pavel E. Shchiogolev

I. THE ARCHIVAL REFORM FROM 1917 ONWARD: MOULDING A MEMORY OF THE PAST

I shall place my Paper in the historical context of shaping a «social memory» (Namer, 1987) of the C19th revolutionary past in Soviet Union, in the first decade after the 1917 Revolution. In post-revolutionary Russia written memories as well as complete biographies and other testimonies of former political revolutionists appeared in the press and upon them historically-based novels were grounded (Brintingler, 2000). These materials were mostly built on secret Tsarist archival documentation that entered into possession of Soviet authorities within the framework of the archival reform initiated in 1917 by the first Provisional Government and, eventually, brought about, in the following decade, by the Federal Archival Agency of Russia (Главное управление архивным делом-ГУАД) in compliance with the ends furthered by the «Narkompros» (People’s Commissariat for Education of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) (Хорхордина, 1994 : 7-142).

Less than six months after the October Revolution, the Tsarist archives had been opened and centralized, its several funds reordered and classified according to European criteria critically applied by Soviet scholars. Since the outset of the Second Russian Revolution, in March 1917, P. V. Shchiogolev had the means of consulting, steadily and extensively, a vast quantity of evi-
dence written about the vicissitudes of the many Populists who ended up in the Tsarist prisons. These sources, which came from the Tsarist ministries of Justice and Internal Affairs, as well as from the archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences, where they could be consulted at the Tsar's discretion, were brought together in a single, central archival fond, according to the governmental decree issued on 1 June 1918, under the supervision of the Headquarters of Archival Affairs, subordinate to «Narkompros». What had served until the eve of the Revolution as an exclusive storage site for the Tsarist administrative documentation was afterwards gradually transformed into an institution for producing works of art based on history: the aim was to find in the recent past living traces of a bloody fight against despotism, demonstrating that the October Revolution had been the final stage of a long-term process that had its roots in the 19th. This aspect is strongly reflected in the seventh of the eight sections into which the newly founded Soviet State archives (Gosarchivy RSFSR) were organized: designated as «Section of the Historical Archives of the Revolution», it contained documents of various types (including illegal literature, personal dossiers with biographies, and memoirs of the political prisoners, together with the Acts of the judicial inquiries), which had been either produced by or seized from the dissenters arrested by the Tsarist Secret Police.

What indeed distinguished this archival reform from the previous European ones was the tendency to enhance a piece by claiming for it absolute truth in order to facilitate the politicisation of the masses. Bolsheviks would attempt to retain, preserve and celebrate the collective memories of revolt, contained in the documents of the Section of the Historical Archives of the Revolution, as part of a political memory under construction in many cultural spheres. There are extensive studies supporting such a thesis.

All this archival heritage was used by the Soviet Marxist historiography in its ascent to tell a multivoice story of 19th Russian socialism. Halfway through the 1920s texts began to be published of what would become, by the end of the following decade, the first, enormous Soviet bibliography dedicated to the Russian Populists, and in particular to those of the extremist section of the 'mature Populism' of «Народная Воля» («The People's Will»).

As many publications in the home press of the period attest, a few Soviet historians, alongside thinkers, undertook to reconstruct the stories of the Populists condemned to life imprisonment for political crime. Beside journalism and pamphlets—notably the very popular book «Народовольцы на перепутьи. Дело Лахтинской типографии с приложением док-тов и "Летучих листков" Группы народовольцев» [«Populists at the cross-road. A work printed by the Lakhta’s typography with attached documents and "Leaflets" from the People's Will group»], 1925] edited by P. F. Kudeli, a former member of «The People's Will» («Народная воля», 1879-1887) and, thereafter, a publicist serving the Bolshevik Party—one might consider, as further tangible proof of this tendency, an iconography: the 'genealogical blazon' illustrating the title page of the brochure «Календарь Народной Воли на 1883 г.» [«Calendar of the People's Will For the Year 1883»]. This diagram would have been deposited in the «Петроград Museum of the Revolution» in 1923 and reproduced in catalogue the same year to represent the great ancestors of Bolsheviks (Похельсон, 1923 : 44-51; Календарь Народной Воли на 1883 г.).
In a number of similar illustrated surveys published by the Museum of the Revolution a place of honour was reserved for «The People's Will», for having upheld the community ideal despite persecution and prison, thereby acquiring the status of 'civil martyr' pertaining to a never-written history of the fallen and redeemed (Альбом по истории ВКП(б) 1874-1917: 10-11). Likewise, certain well-known conspirators and regicides, belonging either to extinct Nihilist societies or to other revolutionary bodies, were the protagonists in the plots of a number of films which involved historians as consultants and were produced by the Soviet State since the mid-1920s till the early 1930s.2

II. MAKING THE HISTORY OF RADICAL REVOLUTIONISTS THROUGH FILMS

Apart from Marxist scholars, also a number of Soviet directors would rely, for artistic purposes, upon or at least were inspired by the above-mentioned sources just merged from the secret archives of the Tsar; the revolts and uprisings they reconstructed served as important moments for the Bolsheviks in their project of shaping a version of history that would have made the accomplishment of the October Revolution a historical necessity. Originally, this operation of celebrating the past was carried out in specific political conditions that guaranteed some albeit limited freedom of expression in Soviet culture.

Also the young Soviet cinematography of the time adhered to this propagandistic mainstream by paying particular attention to revolts and insurrectional events: in the second half of the 1920s almost one third of the feature-films produced by the national film studios dealt with subjects taken from the Russian and European revolutionary history. These works as a whole encompassed historical events occurred in the period between the French 1789 and forward till the October 1917 in Moscow—in a good part of them, ample space was given to the 1905 Russian Revolution (Youngblood, 1991: 173-184).3

Representing the Populist past through cinematic storytelling was not the achievement of the Soviet cinematography; first dramas centred on the deeds of particular Russian regicides were promptly produced and screened soon after the 1917 February Revolution. Stories that would have been almost unimaginable telling in the Tsarist epoch were, eventually, disclosed, in the new conditions of freedom following the First Provisional Government's abolishment of political censorship (Orlovsky, 1989: 39-56). Afterwards, certain characters either inspired by or connected with Russian Populism's history appeared in action-driven fictional films of the time (Ginzburg, 2007: 433-45). In 1917, the Revolution that has just come about made many owners of private film companies to draw their attention to the historical-revolutionary theme—a theme that was second only to the far more requested ones of the romantic dramas normally presenting spicy love stories among Russian higher society (Аксенов, 2000: 57-80). Once the Soviet government installed and established its ideological-propagandistic engine, this production line in the motion-pictures industry did not dissipate—on the contrary, it strengthened.

In 1917 Russian studios released for immediate screening seven long-feature films, whose main positive heroes were loosely based, or even closely shaped upon the example of the Populist terrorists.4 Among

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them there were two dramas of a melodramatic type, whose subject-lines were retrieved from the memorable book «Underground Russia: Revolutionary Profiles and Sketches from Life» («Подпольная Россия», 1883) written by S. M. Stepniak-Kravchinsky—himself Nihilist and a former member of «The People's Will». The first film version of this subject was «Не надо крови» [(«No Need of Blood»), parallel title: «Дело Ольги Перновской» [«The Olga Pernovskai Affair»]. Yakov Protazanov, one of the most skilled directors of the Russian pre-revolutionary cinematography completed the making of «Не надо крови» in April 1917, some days before starting to direct «Андрей Кожуков» [«Andrei Kozhukov»], another costume-drama adapting Kravchinsky’s literary work («Жизнь нигилиста» [(«The Life of a Nihilist»), 1888].

As these two first fictional films on Populist exploits enjoyed great success of public in Moscow and Petrograd over the months, shortly after their release, in summer 1917 Dmitry Kharitonov’s film company (one of the major domestic studios at work during the First World War) assigned to a professional, namely Petr Chardynin, the realization of «Софья Перовская» [«So’fia Perovskaia»], that made the story of the historical character a topical subject. As soon as both «No need of Blood» and «Andrei Kozhukov» entered the internal distribution, they were warmly welcomed by the audience, which has been the case several times since then throughout 1917—both they would keep on being shown in the post-revolutionary period till 1925 (Арлаzanов, 1973: 73-74). Some well-known figures, who, in the years leading up to the Russian Revolution, had attempted by means of individual terror to defeat the Tsarist régime (e. g. Dmitry Karakozov, Stepan Khalturin, Sergei Netchaev, So’fia Perovskaia, Vera Figner, and other Poplists, their fellows) appeared in a few films as well as incomplete scripts (such as «Александр Улянов—брат Ленина» [«Aleksandr Uljanov—Lenin’s brother»] and «81 год» [«The Year 81st»], this latter left unfinished by Vera Figner), which were made between 1918 and 1932 (Троицкий, 2009: 92).

There is little doubt that in early Soviet Russia cinema was one of the most popular forms of entertainment ever exploited over large urban areas of the country at the expenses of other leisure activities for young people such as reading. Shortly after the formation of the Russian Federation, cinema was transformed into an instrument of propaganda among young audiences specially in St. Petersburg/Leningrad, where halfway through the 1920s there were around seventy film-theatres in place (Лебина, 1999: 245-48). A considerable part of these theatres showed a good portion of politically concerned feature-films such as «Красные дьяволы» [(«Little Red Devils», Ivan Perestiani, 1923), «Чудотворец» [(«The Miracle Maker»], Aleksandr Zarin, 1922) «Дипломатическая тайна» [(«The Secret of the Diplomat», Boris Tshaikovsky, 1923) and others—all of them were furnished to mostly private tradesmen by the Soviet State-controlled organ «Севзапкино» [(«Северо-Западное Областное Управление по делам фото и кинематографии» [(«North-Western Regional Photo and Film Administration»)]).

«Севзапкино» was a Bolshevik institution subordinated to the «Наркомпрос» and the film-studio «Госкино», on whose authority it managed completely the municipal film distribution in the 1920s, and produced as much as the central State directory body of the Cinematography—«USSR State Committee for Cinematography» («Госкино»), and later «Совкино» (ЦГАЛИ, Ф. 83-3-5: 13-16).
In the mid 1920s, there was a portion of long-feature films specially designed for being the hit of the period and both produced by the «Sevzapkino», certainly the most industrious State film-studio in Petrograd/Leningrad. In the first ten years of Soviet Russia, historical-revolutionary films enjoyed a success with young audiences by incorporating into their narrative structure the genre of the historical melodrama, the plots of which focused on the story of the «important individual»—which the contemporary official historiography eventually rejected. For instance, «The Palace and the fortress» (1924) and «Stepan Khalturin» (1927)—both directed by A. V. Ivanovsky—presented two stories centred on noteworthy figures of terrorists in the Populist movement who were executed for committing political crimes.

The screenplays of two of these films were written by P. E. Shchiogolev, an extremely important literate and historian for the Russian cultural heritage. As scholars have noted, Shchiogolev was one of the few professional historians to be engaged by the Narkompros for carrying out the above mentioned archival Reform—that the Soviet administration had endorsed in line with the project for making the history of the Communist event (Хорхордина, 1994 : 70-71).

«The Palace and the fortress» dramatises the vicissitudes of Michail Beideman, a young democrat who forsakes his own class and professional background as a military officer (he is a junker, a member of the higher ranks of the Imperial Guard) to become a courier for the intellectual Aleksandr Herzen.

«Stepan Khalturin» deals with the deeds of the peasant revolutionary Stepan Khalturin, who was hanged by the Tsar for his part in the terror act that lead to the assassination of the Procuror-General of the circuit law-court in Kiev, V. S. Strel'nikov—the man who had prosecuted several members of The People's Will Party in a number of consecutive political trials—particularly at the «193» judicial process (1878-1879) (Троицкий, 1994 : 315), also known as one of the most giant trials brought against Russian Populists and their followers—and as a result, inflicted on them such severe punishments that he made a name of a 'tyrant' for himself among revolutionists (Троицкий, 1994 : 189-90).

As late as 1929, both films continued to enjoy widespread distribution as well as outstanding popularity despite negative publicity by the Party critics9.

III. BUILDING A FICTIONAL IMAGE TO S. M. NECHAEV

In the context described so far, re-staging the Russian revolutionary past lead to building images of heroes that could satisfy propaganda’s aims. There is one specific film, «The Palace and the Fortress», in which Shchiogolev employed for artistic purposes archival items to which had exclusive and direct access, being both the person in charge of directing the reordering of the funds of the Tsarist secret police departments (documents of the trials, written testimonies such as missives and confessions) to be archived at the «Petrograd Museum of the Revolution», and an executive fellow of the ISTPART (Committee for the History of the October Revolution and of the Russian Communist Party).

«The Palace and the Fortress» was produced by the State company «Sevzapkino»—under the direction of the Central Committee of the Party—which at the very beginning of its export activity had invested a
large amount of money in its creation. The idea was to produce a grandiose Soviet film to be widely distributed not only at home but also abroad, Europe in particular. It was stated in a promotional article published in the newspaper «Правда», the main Bolshevik press-organ of the ruling elite, that since the film blurred the facts between fiction and fact (Гусман, 1924 : 6), it perfectly fulfilled the task for which it was generously sponsored by the State. "The Palace and the Fortress" quickly scored a great success with the public and was sold at a profit whereby the «Sevzapkino» could invest money in developing its own production's plans.

In the film, the young nobleman Beideman is in love with Vera, the daughter of a rich landowner. Given up all hope of Vera, who in the meantime has married into the upper echelons of the nobility, Beideman devotes himself to the cause of the annihilation of despotism. He therefore embraces the democratic ideas of the socialist revolutionary movement. Fleeing to Europe, the revolutionary finds a job in London, at the printing house of the Russian journal «Kolokol» («The Bell») for the «Free Russian Press».

When in 1861 Beideman comes back to Russia to fulfill his new mission in the name of the peasants' emancipation, on the eve of the Manifesto on the rural reform abolishing serfdom, he has by then acquired a reputation as a political criminal. At last, he is arrested and given a life sentence, without any inquest, by direct order of Tsar Alexander II. He is imprisoned on the evidence of a draft of a manifesto found in his pocket, according to which he would appeal to the people to overthrow the Tsar. Being held in solitary confinement in a cell of the Peter and Paul fortress for twenty years, Beideman ends up by losing his mind; hence he is committed to the psychiatric hospital of Kazan'.

In the «The Palace and the Fortress» there is a subplot with S. M. Nechaev treated sympathetically: "around him the revolutionary youth regrouped" and he was arrested by Tsarist authorities because he had incited loyal subjects (students) to rebellion against the Tsar, and nor because he had machinate the murder of the student Ivanov—fact that is neither mentioned in the filmic captions nor recalled visually. Nechaev behaves as a moral man, who sacrifices himself for the benefit of all revolutionaries. At first, when Nechaev is questioned by Alexander II, and the latter demands him to give the names of his companions, the man refuses to answer and, afterwards, he is imprisoned in the barbican (Fig. 1). At last, in prison he showed sincere brotherhood towards Beideman, who shared the same destiny as a political prisoner and was suffering of madness in the adjacent cell.

In the Nechaev not only writes with his own blood an appeal of grace asking for Beideman's sake, but also requests that the executive Committee of the People' Will liberate his fellow (Пиотровский, 1936 : 70-71, 74). The man who for more than forty years had been regarded as a mountebank and an impostor, was now praised as a positive revolutionary figure of the highest importance, the one who already in the opening stages of the movement had pointed the way which the revolution had to take. Both Beideman and Nechaev represent the regicide par excellence, who is glorified in the «The Palace and the Fortress».

Among these positive heroes there was Nechaev, who was treated sympathetically in the subplot in which he was involved. The man who for more than forty years had been regarded as a cheat and an impostor was now praised as an outstanding revolutionary figure of the highest importance, the one who al-
ready in the opening stages of the movement had pointed the way the revolution had to take. In the 1920s, this reversal of opinion concerning Nechaev was consequent upon the opening of the archives: as biographers have asserted over the years, there was scarcely a Bolshevist periodical of importance which did not print some detail about him, his fate, his teachings or at least reminiscences of him by his contemporaries and followers, some of whom were still alive.

However, Shchiogolev moulded Nechaev’s fictional character on grounds other than those afforded by the memoirs that saw the light at the turn of the C19th and, shortly afterwards, in the scientific journal «Былое» (Былое, 1904(6) : 27-32; Земляк, 1912 : 70-73). The historian departed from the distinctly negative portrait of this revolutionary that had been produced by the press, notably by the ISTPART’s journal «Красный Архив» (Красный Архив, 1922 : 280-81; Козьмин, 1926(14) : 148-59; 1926(15) : 150-63), as a result of the public trial which found Nechaev guilty of having caused the death of the student I. I. Ivanov in 1869.

The image of Nechaev promoted in «The Palace and the Fortress» is totally different from the one outlined many years before by Aleksandr Herzen in his letters: apparently the great Russian literary figure must have been unfavourably impressed by his close encounter with Nechaev in May 1869, and thus went so far as to demonize the latter as a «moody individual» [«человек обречённый»]—using a well known quotation from the principal manifesto of Nihilism «Chatechism of a Revolutionary» (1869-1871)—ready to commit a benchmark murder in order to consolidate in blood his political organization—«The People’s Retribution» («Народная расправа», 1869-1870).

Shchiogolev was perfectly aware of the picture of Nechaev that was given by Bakunin in his unpublished letters and by the народоволец in their own publication («Вестник Народной Воли», № 1, 1881): criminal characteristics that Nechaev was know to have were due to his exceptional capacity for action and persuasion (ИРЛИ РО, 627-3-2 : 21-36; 627-3-51 : 1-2; 627-3-52 : 1).

This picture of Nechaev was eventually incorporated in the collective memory of the last Russian Populists; these latter had described Nechaev as a charismatic revolutionist undergoing and surviving his painful detention in Tsarist prisons, but those of them who wrote during their exile abroad, following the regime, tended to dissociate themselves from Nechaev’s methods of coercion and conspiracy (Сватиков, 1907 : 165-249).
There was now proposed a different public memorial to Nechaev, designed to erase the image of the imposter and murderer calcified in the memories of certain historians and revolutionaries who were his contemporaries. Nechaev was, in the end, lauded as a thinker of the highest level, who from the first stage of the movement for freedom from autocracy had anticipated the proper strategy to pursue so as to arrive at the establishment of a government of professional revolutionaries. Nechaev became one of the forerunners of Bolshevism, not without the essential contribution of Lenin, who encouraged the study of him, and Shchiogolev, who wrote a substantiated biography of him and dedicated to him the fifth and last long chapter of «Alexei-Ravelin» («Алексеевский равелин») (Щёголев, 1929 : 188-376).

This process of the glorification of Nechaev found its application in the cinema thanks to «The Palace and the Fortress»: he stands up as co-protagonist alongside Beideman who in the second part of the film is transformed from magnificent hero into a figure in the background. Sliding into second place, Beideman surrenders the scene to Nechaev, who will bring the theme of political dissent back into the centre of the action. Not only Nechaev was glorified but also the historical character of Beideman was turned into that of a political murderer, who came back to the Motherland from Europe, where he had joined revolutionary units, eager to commit regicide. «The Palace and the Fortress» particularly focuses upon Nechaev who comes out as an exemplum of bravery in the filmic episode, where he prefers to place the collective interests before his personal ones; in this episode, the Executive Committee of the «People’s Will» delivers to Nechaev a secret letter offering to release him, but he insists to postpone his escape from the Ravelin and suffer further isolation, instead of endangering the regicide’s action that the Committee had set and was to happen very soon thereafter.

Before the film was distributed, a few articles on Nechaev appeared in the Party press; however, they did not reveal anything new concerning his biography that the pre-Revolutionary press would not have published. Shchiogolev turned the bad reputation surrounding Nechaev as a murderer into an honourable one thanks to such notable deeds as succeeding in persuading the sentries of the Fortress of the rightness of the revolutionary cause. Rather, he relegated to the background Nechaev’s murky past prior to his arrest by enhancing what he presented as true historical proofs officially presented to the Tsar by the Adjutant General, the Commandant and the Warden of the Fortress—biased witnesses, who would have had every reason to discredit Nechaev but did not do so—indeed, they praised his conduct. Not only could he study the archival dossiers containing secret papers produced on Prisoner № 5, as Nechaev was labelled in the Fortress throughout his detention (27 January 1873-21 December 1882 OS), but he also was inspired by the poem «Student» («Студент», 1868) in which N. P. Ogarev eulogises his friend Nechaev by recalling his humble peasant origins (ИРЛИ РО, 627-3-2 : 73).

By 1920 the ISTPART Commission had been established for the gathering, processing and realising of materials concerning the story of the October Revolution and the Communist Party. While early Soviet film companies independently produced of that committee, they nonetheless contributed to the process of reinventing the past for ideological purposes through specific works consisting in a series (Алексеева, 1982 : 17-21). Works such as
the «Palace and the Fortress», «October», «Stepan Khalturin» as well as the six-parts serial «Из искры пламя» («Нить за нитью»), D. Bassaligio, 1924) and a number of other grandiose fictional films of the time participated in the process of moulding a political memory of the Russian past, that had significance to the present.

Given the in-depth investigation conducted so far, a wider discourse based on further primary sources could examine how, in the 1920s, prominent Russian historians and literates—such as Yulian Oksman, Yury Tynjanov and Viktor Shlovsky—contributed to a number of other Soviet films meant to revive the Russian revolutionary past. Given that Bolsheviks paid considerable attention to the use of history since the very beginning of their rule, a further in-depth investigation on a wider range of historical-revolutionary films could provide an insight into a issue that goes beyond the specificity of my subject: how cinematic narratives complied with the aims of the political elite at power?

ENDNOTES

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, translations from Russian to English are mine.
[2] Throughout the 1920s in Russia, the first collections of authors like Bakunin, Tkachyov, Lavrov, who were among the most influential spirits in the Populist groups, were legally published. There was ongoing research into Populism, and scholarly journals such as «Каторга и ссылка», «Красный архив» and «Красная летопись» regularly published essays and memoirs either written by the populists or concerning them.

[4] Many Russian films on the 1905 were produced in the silent era and, among them, there was «Броненосец Потёмкин» («Battleship Potemkin»), S. M. Eisenstein, 1925) which was to be appraised worldwide. One of the most representative fictional films set at the time of the First Russian Revolution was «9-ое января 1905 г.» ( «9 January 1905»). This work featured one of the events that marked the beginning of the violent phase of the 1905’s revolutions. The Revolution of 1905 had been an unprecedented empire-wide upheaval, set in motion by the ruthless suppression on Sunday 9th January (hence the name ‚Bloody Sunday’) in St-Petersburg of a mass procession comprised of workers and their relatives addressing a petition for the Tsar.

[5] In 1917, appeared a number of dramas, in which the life and death of given Russian Populists was featured. Apart from those enlisted herein, see: «Революционер» (Е. Барцев), «Под облаками самодержавия» («Любил и... предал», В. Висковский), «Бабушка русской революции» (aka «Мученица за свободу», Б. Светлов). «Товарищ Елена» (Елена Чернышева, Комитет Елены). Софья Л. Перовская was the noteworthy young Populist, one of the leaders of the People’s Will, who went down in history for having participated in the regicide of 1881 and, afterwards, executed at the age of twenty-eight.

[6] Both films, «Дело Ольги Перовской» and «Софья Перовская» are given as lost by catalogues. As stated in one of the promotional advertisements published in 1917, Ольга Перовская was a girl who entered the revolutionary movement during the first Russian Revolution: her story was a true story since it was based on her diary. This diary was found together with some photographic portraits after the 1917 February Revolution among the documents belonging to the former Russian secret police. According to the synopsis of «Дело Ольги Перовской», there are many points of contact between the profiles of the two heroines taken from real-life (the 1905’s revolutionist and her counterpart, the Populist of «Софья Перовская»). In the film-plot, Ольга Перовская was born from an aristocratic family during the Russian Empire; when she completed her studies, in 1905, she moved in Petrograd, to live with her father, an eminent General of the Military District. When, in the city, the situation collapsed and people in arms climbed barricades, Сергей, a young socialist-revolutionary in

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love with Ol’ga, was mortally wounded by a policeman. Determined to avenge the death of her fellow, the girl killed the General, who had ordered to suppress rebels. She was condemned to twenty years of hard labours. Thanks to the amnesty following February 1917, political prisoners were liberated and Ol’ga as well. During an assembly of the Petrograd Soviet, she recognizes, among participants, the man who betrayed the SR’s Party in 1905. In order to prevent people from illegally executing the betrayer, she cries for him: “Не надо крови”, вскрывает Ольга, но большое сердце не выдерживает и девушка через минуту умирает на руках депутатов». РГИА-Российский Государственный Исторический Архив, Ф. 497. Оп. 18, Д. 1214-“Афиши кинотеатров в Петрограде в 1917”, р. 32.

«Sevzapkino» was established in 1922 and started its production activities in 1923. ЦГАИПД. Ф. 1442. Оп. 1. Д. 9-“Материалы по обследованию коллектива Севзапкино”, р. 147.

«Sevzapkino» ruled the distribution for the following film studios in Petrograd: Областной Кино-Комитет, Коллектив артистов экрана, Кино Север.

«The Palace and the Fortress» obtained such a success with the audience that it sold out many times at the box office; the film was programmed sixty-five times obtaining on the whole two and fifty screenings within the theatrical circuit in Leningrad—this comprising the cinemas: Ампир, Астартэ, Паризиана, Пробуждение). On the one hand the film enjoyed great success, on the other hand a substantial part of Party’s reviewers harshly criticized. "Пролетарий", 1924, no. 7.

Among a number of historians (John Barber, Marc Ferro, Maria Ferretti, Ju. N. Matesev, M. V. Zelenov) who in their works have paid attention to the role of history in the newly works Soviet regime, Frederick C. Corney draws on a wide range of sources—archives, published works, films—to explore the potential foundation narrative of the October Revolution. Corney F. C. Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution. London: Cornell University Press, 2004.

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